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The Nation.

May 19, 1984 $1.25; U.K. 65p

EDITORIAL

THE RULE OF THE GAMES

The XXIII Olympiad, like many others in the last half-century, is a political arena in which disparate forces contend for different prizes. For corporate America's titans and eager aspirants, the Olympics are a global marketplace where fortunes will be spent and made. The Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee has been selling logo-display rights and franchises in Olympic goods with such abandon that the whole event is beginning to look like a TV docudrama about the last days of capitalism.

For the Soviet authorities, the Olympics have always been a place to win international acceptance and build patriotic pride. But this year's Games presented special dangers. Most obviously, the Russians risked entanglements in cold war confrontations on American turf. Anticommunist groups had announced they would encourage and facilitate defections, the State Department imposed visa and travel restrictions and there was a strong possibility President Reagan (and the Democrats as well) would seize the opportunity for some election-year bear-baiting.

No doubt all those considerations entered into the Soviet decision to withdraw. The Russians had, after all, the perfect precedent in Jimmy Carter's 1980 boycott of the Games in Moscow, and it may be that they were just playing turnaround. That seems like fair play, even if it's not in the Olympic rule book.

Sports fans will suffer, the sponsoring business may get pinched, but the worst immediate damage will be to East-West relations. Cultural exchanges—in sport, academics or the arts—are valuable symbolic events. The great powers have always recognized that they can send signals in cultural vehicles that they could not transmit in political ones. There are a lot of bad messages traveling, and they all cry danger.

THE MX DEAL
Toby Moffitt

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OUT OF ZAIRE

WHERE MOBUTU'S MILLIONS GO

JONATHAN KWITNY

Nearly a quarter-century has passed since the Eisenhower Administration stained the U.S. Constitution by overthrowing the legitimate government of the Belgian Congo, now named Zaire. The government we implanted there was thoroughly corrupted by Western business interests. Americans weren't told about the constitutional violations or the corruption. They were told simply that the good guys had won. Freedom would be preserved for Africans, and access to valuable minerals would be guaranteed for the American economy. But today the government the United States established continues to impose a murderous tyranny on its people. And instead of guaranteeing our mineral supplies, it daily holds them hostage to a great economic and moral ransom. At considerable cost, we have achieved nothing and have done great harm.

One justification is usually offered to Congress and taxpayers for their continued support of the Mobutu government: without it Western industry might be cut off from Zaire's strategic minerals by a leftist government. In fact, there is not much danger of a cutoff. War could halt production temporarily, in which event there are stockpiles. Or, as in the case of Iran, U.S. support for a hated dictatorship could engender an anti-Americanism so zealous that it might, for a while, override the economic impetus to trade. But that is a possibility the United States can still avoid in Zaire. In the end, Zairians cannot eat their cobalt, diamonds, copper and other minerals, and any Zairian government would have to be masochistic not

(*Continued on Page 606*)

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LETTERS.

DISARMING JESSE

New York City

While I agree with the thrust of Richard Falk's article lamenting the absence of a Democratic challenge to the Pentagon's "national security" assumptions for reasons of political opportunism, he is off the mark when it comes to Jesse Jackson ["What the Democrats Aren't Saying," *The Nation*, May 5]. Describing Jackson's "manner" in the New York primary debate, Falk says the candidate "conveyed little familiarity or concern with the issue" of no first use of nuclear weapons.

Actually, Falk conveys little familiarity with the Jackson campaign. In addition to his sharp departure from the Mondale and Hart positions upholding the Pentagon's strategy during the debate, Jackson has made renunciation of first use a staple of his campaign. He first raised the issue during the Vermont primary, two months before the New York debate, then began to push it in Massachusetts. It has become one of Jackson's major themes.

Falk decries the fact that earlier challenges to the military and foreign policy views of the Pentagon resulted in the challengers—like McCarthy and McGovern—being "discredited and effectively destroyed as national political leaders" via innuendo. What then are we to make of Falk's conclusion that Jackson—who alone among the remaining candidates would not only renounce first use but eliminate "first-strike" nuclear weapons like the cruise and Pershing 2, who would actually *cut* military spending and who does dissent from the "bipartisan consensus" on a just and real peace in the Middle East, southern Africa and Central America—"clearly doesn't know enough to speak convincingly on issues vital to the future of all Americans." The problem is not with Jackson's speech but with Falk's hearing. . . .

Michael Myerson, Executive Director
U.S. Peace Council

THE PRICE OF DISSENT—I

Penn Valley, Pa.

Gifford Phillips explains George McGovern's loss to Nixon as the result of "McGovern's inept campaigning (especially his mishandling of the Eagleton affair) as well as the electorate's perception that Nixon was about to extricate the country from the war" ["Fatal Feud?" *The Nation*, May 5]. But Phillips misses the point. Every candidate makes numerous mistakes; Eisenhower, Nixon, Ford and especially Reagan offered the press many opportunities for disparagement. The problem is to explain the dichotomy between the tolerance that greets some mistakes and the victimization that greets others.

The elements of Watergate were already in the public domain before the 1972 election; the fact that Nixon had ordered a price hike in milk following generous campaign gifts from the dairy lobby had surfaced, but it failed to generate media interest. Political scientist James Barber has noted that "Ronald Reagan is the first modern President whose contempt for the facts is treated as a charming idiosyncrasy." The secret of differential treatment is clearly a policy preference on the part of the dominant economic and media interests. As Richard Falk points out in the same issue, dissenters on fundamentals of foreign policy (and economic policy, we can add) are "victims of subtle but assured media assassination," quickly "deprived of 'credibility'" as they step beyond the boundaries of reasonable dissent. Falk mentions McGovern explicitly. Reagan, by contrast, meets the criteria on fundamentals, and is thus allowed gaffes as numerous as the chips in Atlantic City without political cost.

Edward S. Herman

THE PRICE OF DISSENT—II

In the April 28 "Dispatches," Kai Bird and Max Holland observe that "according to State Department figures, in the first year of the Carter Administration Foreign Service officers filed twenty-eight dissent cables," as compared with only fifteen in 1981 and only five in 1983. If those figures (which I have not seen elsewhere) are correct, I must have submitted about half the dissent channel messages that the department received in 1977, during my second year as U.S. labor attaché in Australia.

The U.S. Embassy in Canberra responded to my dissents by giving me the two lowest fitness ratings I received in twenty-seven years as a Foreign Service officer and by getting the department to agree to transfer me prematurely to a nonjob in Washington.

In order to get those fitness ratings removed from my personnel file, I had to appeal to the Foreign Service Grievance Board, charging that they constituted efforts to penalize me for dissent in flagrant violation of the regulations. In order to avoid taking an assignment I hadn't requested and didn't want, I had to apply for early retirement from the Foreign Service.

Given the Reagan Administration's appalling performance to date in the field of foreign relations, I suggest that *The Nation* could do worse than print a major article, preferably sometime before election day, on the present and longstanding plight of dissent in the U.S. Foreign Service.

Arthur W. Purcell

DEFINING TERRORISM

Bellmore, N.Y.

By categorizing the government of Israel with those of El Salvador and Guatemala [editorial, "Terrorism 138," April 28], *The Nation* has demonstrated a flair for fashionable Middle East politics and an unfortunate lack of judgment. Amazingly, while *The Nation* seems happy to conclude that Israel officially sanctions terrorism, it simultaneously admits to lacking a clear definition of terrorism. "One man's terrorist is another's freedom fighter," we are told.

In fact, terrorism does not defy definition. As clearly as the P.L.O.'s bombing of a bus filled with civilians *is* a terrorist act, the F.M.L.N.'s attack on a military garrison is not. There is a similar distinction between the massacre of Indians by the Guatemalan Army and the occupation of the West Bank by Israel. The former is indiscriminate violence—not unlike the P.L.O.'s—and the latter is a military occupation, even by the worst accounts absent of such brutality.

To show support for Palestinian rights does not require the distortion of fact or the obscuring of the definitions of easily definable words like "terrorist." Furthermore, were *The Nation*'s characterization of Israel as a state that sanctions terrorism correct, the "feeble" response of the P.L.O. would still be morally unjustified. A fair appraisal of Israel and a clear repudiation of terrorism would do much more to further the cause of all struggles for national liberation than the ambiguous and confused line *The Nation* seems to have taken.

Aaron R. Morrill

DOUBLE STANDARD

New Haven, Conn.

The editorial "Terrorism 138" approves of or tolerates the intentional murder of innocent human beings in behalf of favored causes while opposing any defensive action on behalf of terrorism's victims, an amoral attitude strikingly at variance with a belief in fundamental human rights. The reluctant concession that "a bomb in an ambassador's car *may* be a clear-cut case of terrorism" (emphasis added) falls far short of a firm commitment to either the sanctity of human life or the tradition of diplomatic immunity that makes peaceful resolution of disputes possible. By opposing the use of paid informants in terrorism cases, the editorial would abandon an important investigative tool without achieving any gains in civil liberties or procedural safeguards.

If "an attack by a guerrilla army against a U.S. military mission is an act of war" and thus permissible, U.S. military and police action against those who take hostages or slaughter civilians should also be permissible. The editorial's willingness to understand "freelance terrorism" in El Salvador and Guatemala and on the West Bank while condemning the Nicaraguan *contras* illustrates its underlying ideological double standard. The proportionate use of necessary force to protect the victims of terrorism is morally justifiable; the use of political bias masquerading as an ethical principle in order to excuse murder is not.

Alan D. Viard

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EDITORIALS.

Boudin's Choice

For Kathy Boudin, what began as a political trial ended in a political settlement. Boudin was charged with murder and robbery under a New York State law that makes an accessory to a felony liable to the same criminal penalties as the perpetrator. Her part in the 1981 holdup of a Brink's truck and in the killing of three people was "secondary," as Judge David Ritter conceded. She sat unarmed in a getaway car some distance from the scene of the crime. Even so, Boudin could have been sent to prison for a minimum of seventy-five years; others involved in the robbery and shoot-out got that sentence at an earlier trial.

But as the long jury-selection process neared its conclusion in a White Plains courtroom, she and her lawyers figured that the risks of a trial in the highly charged political atmosphere were too great. The state agreed, for its own reasons. The bargain struck was a sentence of twenty years to life, with parole possible only after seventeen and a half years.

The case raised an extraordinary set of issues which, for the most part, remain barely examined. The state characterized Boudin as a terrorist mastermind and punished her persistently during the two and a half years before the trial. Her prison conditions were unusually harsh, and when a Federal judge ordered that she be removed from isolation and placed in the general prison population, the state simply transferred her to another prison, where her solitary confinement continued. Since issues of race and class infused the crime, the defense wanted the trial moved out of white, middle-class suburbia and into an urban courtroom where a jury might be more sympathetic to its arguments, but it got no farther

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than the pricey heart of Westchester County. At the courthouse there, the authorities erected an absurd "security" system which looked like the setting for Eichmann in Jerusalem.

The press put the radical generation of the 1960s on trial long before one of its most prominent members went into court. The prosecution was apparently prepared to continue on that tack; there's no telling how much history would have been hauled before the jury. Outside, Boudin's old friends, a warm and loyal band of survivors of the big chill, offered whatever personal support and moral encouragement they could. Their belief in Boudin's principled motives—despite the violent events in which she was enmeshed—was strong, and at the end, even the judge and the prosecutor noted that her involvement in the bungled and bloody holdup grew out of humane convictions.

Many others from earlier eras of political activism were strict and unforgiving in their judgments. Much of the left seemed eager to accept the media's definitions of terrorism and to dismiss black radicalism for its excesses without understanding the roots of black rage. There was an honest, moral way to support Kathy Boudin while condemning the holdup and her participation in it. It was to see the black movement in America as a long and tortured but historically necessary struggle that challenges the commitment of radicals who agree with its broad outline. Some of the choices they have to make are easy and good, and some are hard or terribly wrong. But no one can claim that Boudin was unaware of the necessity of choice or unwilling to take the consequences of error.

Buyer Beware

José Napoleón Duarte is probably the best President of El Salvador that money could buy. His purchase price, which runs into millions of dollars, was laid out by various American agencies and came in several forms: the C.I.A. bankrolled a Salvadoran labor organization promoting Duarte's candidacy; the State Department set up, paid for and manipulated the Salvadoran electoral system to favor Duarte; President Reagan poured cash from his "discretionary fund" into Salvadoran pockets on the eve of the election; and the American media bought heavily into the deal with a spectacular propaganda offering for Duarte's cause.

They are not likely to get much of a return on their investment. Duarte is only the best of a very bad lot, and although his loyalty to his American mentors is solid, his competence to manage the Salvadoran crisis is not. He makes vague suggestions about opening a "dialogue" with the F.M.L.N./F.D.R. but as yet offers no credible plan for reconciling demands of the revolutionaries with the interests of the ruling oligarchy. His land reform proposal is a copy of the scheme that American officials pushed in Vietnam in the early days of the war, without success.

Duarte's "moderation" has a peculiar history. It allowed him to serve in the Salvadoran junta from 1980 to 1982, when some 12,000 people were murdered by the death squads. It also moved him to bring his country increasingly under the protection and domination of the United States, thus fueling the forces fighting for independence. There is no reason to hope that Duarte's next act will play any better than his last.

Agent Orange

"The veterans have won the last battle of the Vietnam War," commented attorney Victor Yannacone Jr. last week. The occasion was the out-of-court settlement of the lawsuit Yannacone filed in 1979 on behalf of Vietnam veterans and their families, claiming that the U.S. government and seven chemical companies were responsible for various health problems they incurred as a result of exposure to Agent Orange during the war. The settlement, which establishes an interest-bearing fund of $180 million paid for by the manufacturers and controlled by the plaintiffs, was at least a partial victory for veterans. But it was hardly the last battle over Agent Orange.

Reached only seven hours before the scheduled opening of the trial, the agreement surprised the vets. Attorneys for the 16,000 named plaintiffs had been confident of winning a jury trial in Federal District Court in Brooklyn, where surveys showed that 80 percent of the community was sympathetic to their case. But the settlement was accepted, the attorneys explained, because they feared that appeals and new trials would delay compensation to the injured vets another five to ten years. Over the next few months procedures for making claims against the fund will be established by the attorneys and the plaintiffs, veterans' groups and technical experts.

The impact of the settlement on the companies, which continue to deny any liability for the veterans' health problems, can be judged from what happened on Wall Street shortly after it was announced: stock prices of five of the six defendant companies listed on the New York Stock Exchange rose. The cost of the settlement, at least for the bigger companies like Dow and Monsanto, is expected to be largely covered by insurance.

The impact on the veterans, however, is not so clear. Many of them and their families expressed a sense of vindication and relief after five years of litigation. But some have announced that they will challenge the settlement as inadequate; they will have a hearing within three months before Federal Judge Jack Weinstein.

Theirs is only one of several legal actions that may be taken on issues involving Agent Orange in the months ahead. Because the government was not a party to the settlement, it can still be sued by both sides. Dow has announced that it will sue the government to recoup its share of the settlement, and the other companies are expected to do the same. The central question in such cases, as in possible suits by veterans against the government, will be, When did the government find out what the companies had known for

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years—that Agent Orange was contaminated with dioxin, the most powerful synthetic poison ever produced? Veterans who bring suit against the government might argue that the 1950 *Feres v. United States* Supreme Court ruling that veterans cannot sue the government for war-related injuries does not apply in their case. Such a contention could be supported by the fact that in the absence of conclusive studies, the Veterans Administration has refused to admit any link between exposure to Agent Orange and cancer or birth defects; consequently, it has not compensated most claimed victims of Agent Orange and has not provided treatment to affected children or offered genetic counseling and testing to affected couples.

Congress is also considering the Agent Orange issue. Next week the Senate is expected to begin debate on a House bill that would provide $25.5 million in compensation for some vets affected by Agent Orange. Perhaps in this election year both Congress and the Administration will support the establishment of an adequate fund to serve the needs of those poisoned by their own side in Vietnam.

Of course, some—the dead or dying and their families, those who suffer pain and fear, the parents of the children who may never walk or talk or see—can never be adequately compensated. Nor can the tens of thousands of Vietnamese victims of Agent Orange, many of whom live on land still contaminated by the herbicide.

One of the plaintiffs in the settled case said, "Agent Orange is a vast metaphor for the problems left by the Vietnam War." Those problems cannot begin to be solved until the U.S. government is forced—perhaps by other Agent Orange suits—to acknowledge its responsibility for the tragedy of Vietnam.

The MX Deal

As the House prepares to vote this week on whether to eliminate 1985 funding for the MX missile, it should be clear that there isn't the slightest reason to support the weapon. The House has voted down the MX before, most recently in late 1982, but President Reagan was able to revive the project last year thanks to the persistence of the Republican-controlled Senate, the illusion of objectivity created by the Scowcroft commission and the efforts of a trio of "mainstream" Democratic Representatives: Les Aspin of Wisconsin, Albert Gore Jr. of Tennessee and Norman Dicks of Washington.

Few members of Congress defend the MX on its merits. The primary argument used by the defense junkies—those who vote for every proposed weapons system—is that we need to shut the "window of vulnerability" that allows the Soviets to threaten us. But even the Scowcroft commission, stacked firmly in favor of the missile, dismissed that argument. It favored the MX program largely because of political support for it in the Administration.

It was not surprising that the hawks in the House adopted the Scowcroft position, but it was rather extraordinary that three moderate and influential Democrats did. Why did Aspin, Gore and Dicks, all of whom know a lot about defense issues and fashion themselves supporters of a nuclear freeze, agree to a deal with the President that leaves them standing in the way of what would otherwise be an almost certain defeat for the MX? For one thing, they have been heavily courted by the White House, by Secretary of Defense Weinberger and by the President himself since late 1982. They thought they could have an impact on the Reagan arms posture, and they claim they have made a difference. They supported the idea of an "objective" commission to study the options for arms control and maintain that Scowcroft represented a new direction for the Reagan people. They constantly remind their friends in the House that they are taking the tough but vital route of influencing Reagan before he wins a second term. They strongly believe they made a good deal.

In exchange for being Reagan's point men on the MX in the House, what did they get? Initially the President promised them that he would support the Midgetman, first proposed as a single-warhead missile, which would be deployed in the 1990s. Midgetman, the Congressmen argued, would be a "stabilizing" weapon, in contrast to the huge, ten-warhead MX which could not survive a Soviet attack and would therefore become a use-it-or-lose-it first-strike weapon. But that explanation no longer holds up. Current plans call for Midgetman to be boosted so that its warhead has first-strike accuracy and power comparable to the MX's.

Reagan also promised that he would genuinely pursue arms control. The three Congressmen should have known better. The President has never publicly supported any arms treaty agreed to by the nuclear superpowers. His arms control negotiator, Edward Rowny, said in 1980, "We have put too much emphasis on the control of arms and too little on the provision of arms." And his Arms Control and Disarmament director, Kenneth Adelman, said in 1982, "One reason not to rush into negotiations is that these negotiations tend to discourage money for defense programs."

So, with the "window of vulnerability," the Midgetman and the "bargaining chip" arguments all gone, how can the trio continue to support MX? Perhaps they feel trapped. But I suspect there's another reason. I recall vividly, during the energy "crisis" of 1979, sitting for a day at Camp David with President Carter and a handful of energy committee chairmen from Congress, making compromises on synthetic fuel. Only afterward did I realize how the setting, the trappings of power, the illusion of my importance, had influenced me. Perhaps something similar has happened to Aspin, Gore and Dicks. While most Democrats in the House have been relegated to making speeches condemning Reagan's arms policy, these three have been serenaded by the White House, and they like the feeling.

But even if they still don't see the terrible MX deal of 1983 for what it was, there should be, by now, enough House members who do. Those members will vote their conscience this week.

TOBY MOFFITT

Toby Moffitt, a former four-term member of the House from Connecticut, is working to defeat the MX.

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MINORITY REPORT.

CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

On May 3, there came the first call from a lawmaker for the resignation of William J. Casey as Director of Central Intelligence. Representative William F. Goodling of Pennsylvania pointed out the obvious: nobody can trust a word Casey says. (When Max Hugel claimed that he resigned as Casey's deputy "to avoid embarrassing" him, he admitted to one of the most superfluous resignations in history.) The removal of Casey, said the Congressman, would be "the only way I can see" to recast the relationship between the agency and Congress. Goodling is a member of the Intelligence Committee and a Republican. His forthrightness provides a contrast to the docility of Daniel Patrick Moynihan, vice chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee and a Democrat, who, accepting a meaningless apology as his price, made peace with Casey on April 26.

With the reception of his book *Loyalties*, which coincided with his flirtatious near-resignation as vice chairman, Senator Moynihan has been getting more than his usual very respectful press. Some commentators are even beginning to write of his evolution away from the neoconservative wing in politics.

It has been only a short time since Moynihan described the Vietnam rout as "a defeat of democratic aims in Asia." He used to blame that defeat and others on what he had identified as "a diminishment of liberal conviction, a decline possibly in energy which brought about almost an aversion to ideological struggle." As a vigilante against the decline of the West, he complained about the burdensome constraints of the War Powers Act. "Ambiguity was the essence of crisis management," he averred in his book *A Dangerous Place*, "but with the War Powers Act . . . the President could never again be ambiguous." As representative to the United Nations, Moynihan bore an appalling likeness to Ronald Firbank's Mrs. Shamefoot, who asserted, "The world is most disgracefully managed. One scarcely knows to whom to complain."

Now, behold the newly cleansed Moynihan, who has discovered that the President's war powers allow of too much ambiguity, who writes that the United States must respect international law and who regards the 1983 Congressional vote to build the MX missile as "perhaps the most fatal mistake in our history."

A careful reading of *Loyalties* will show, as will a careful scrutiny of his actions, that he hasn't changed all that much. Obviously, the experience of close work with the Reaganites has been unsettling to him. But what did he, a self-professed worldly politician, ever expect? Obviously, the Third World is not the hellhole of irrationality depicted by Jeane Kirkpatrick and Norman Podhoretz. But who made a career of proclaiming that it was? Surveying the Gadarene vote for the MX, Moynihan writes loftily about "the routine that Congress never, in the end, refuses a President a new weapons system; the routine that the Armed Services Committee gets its way." Yet until the MX bill, Moynihan had never voted against a defense appropriation. He obviously thinks this makes his recent position all the more impressive. (He also records the fact that in the first four months of 1983 he received letters from 134,890 New Yorkers who favor a nuclear freeze resolution, which may have had something to do with it.)

Certain things are O.K. only when and if *he* says them:

> During my tenure as U.S. Permanent Representative to the UN, Spanish Sahara was partitioned by Morocco and Mauritania, and Portuguese Timor was invaded and conquered by Indonesia. In both instances the United States was more than content that this should happen, while the Soviet Union, in one instance, and the People's Republic of China, in the other, very much tried to prevent it. The notion of law no more entered *our* policy considerations than it did *theirs*.

Yet those two postcolonial catastrophes (which cost untold numbers of lives) Moynihan considered mere nothings at the time; certainly nothing to dim the brilliance of his own bravura stand against the Third World in general. Just as he still believes there is something called "deterrence" despite what he terms the paradox of the MX as a first-strike weapon, so he still believes that the United States should treat the U.N. majority as enemies of democracy. He manages to review the obviously hypocritical U.N. record on Israel without once mentioning the invasion of Lebanon or the annexation of the West Bank.

In short, Moynihan specializes in having things both ways. His appeal to international law, which looks to be salutary enough when compared with the actions of an utterly lawless Administration, is his way of seeming to be above a battle in which, if truth be told, he is and has been an active combatant. Is there anybody for whom he has not worked? Is there anything that he would not do? A man who has labored for L.B.J. and for Richard Nixon, and who has held Henry Kissinger's coat, needs to be judged by rather stricter standards than other mortals.

Through his excellent press contacts, Moynihan is clearly "signaling" that he is unhappy about the foolhardy and vindictive people in government who are now acting on what used to be his advice. If he wants to be taken seriously, he should give some indication of where his last ditches are located. On what terms would he approve the use of U.S. ground forces in Central America? If he opposes the MX because it will lower nuclear reaction time to twelve minutes, why is he so silent about the cruise and Pershing 2 missiles in Europe, which carry even greater risk? On these points, and on many others no less serious, Moynihan may think that he is carrying the tattered banner of Henry Jackson. But he emerges as a combination of Janus and Jesuit.

Moynihan writes as a Catholic (so he tells us on page 13) and tries to emulate the style of his superior, Conor Cruise O'Brien. I can't judge how good a Catholic the Senator is, but he is certainly a poor O'Brien imitator. I am sure there are many who feel that a sinner who repents, no matter how late, is better than a sinner who does not repent at all. Ought we not to be grateful for small mercies? I think not. The time is short and these mercies are much too small.

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ARTICLES.

PASTURES OF POISON

Suburbia Under The Spray Gun

HAL RUBIN

Last summer thirty-three Japanese beetles showed up in rose bushes in Orangevale and Fair Oaks, peaceful, postcard-pretty suburbs of Sacramento, California. The discovery sent tremors through the fertile Central Valley, where one-quarter of the nation's fruit and vegetables are grown. Those who depend directly on agriculture for their living were understandably concerned about the crops, but many other residents were worried about their health.

Only three years before, Mediterranean fruit flies were spotted in the San Francisco Bay area. The attending panic resulted in repeated aerial sprayings over a 1,300-square-mile portion of the state with the pesticide malathion, derived from organophosphates developed by Hitler's chemists as nerve gases in World War II. Those sprayings amounted to only a small percentage of the 300 million pounds of pesticides dumped on California soil each year, including highly toxic organophosphates, organochlorides and carbamates. But the Med fly experience was significant because it reaffirmed that despite the known hazards of pesticides, wherever insects go, pesticide applicators are right behind. Even heavily populated cities are not off-limits.

Pesticides are hardly unfamiliar to residents of the Central Valley, California's 400-mile-long cornucopia. Crop-dusters swoop over their heads every day, and commercials for bug killers like parathion and Temik saturate the airwaves. Still, when the Japanese beetles appeared, many people remembered the Med fly hysteria and were wary of what might happen. They had good reason to be.

To overcome the Japanese beetle, the California Department of Food and Agriculture (C.D.F.A.) quickly assembled a panel of entomologists. They chose the commonly used pesticides Sevin and diazinon to poison the beetles in the trees and soil. But something much more powerful and persistent was needed to kill 90 to 100 percent of the larvae hiding in the soil and grass roots—the level of effectiveness the entomologists decided was necessary to eradicate the threat.

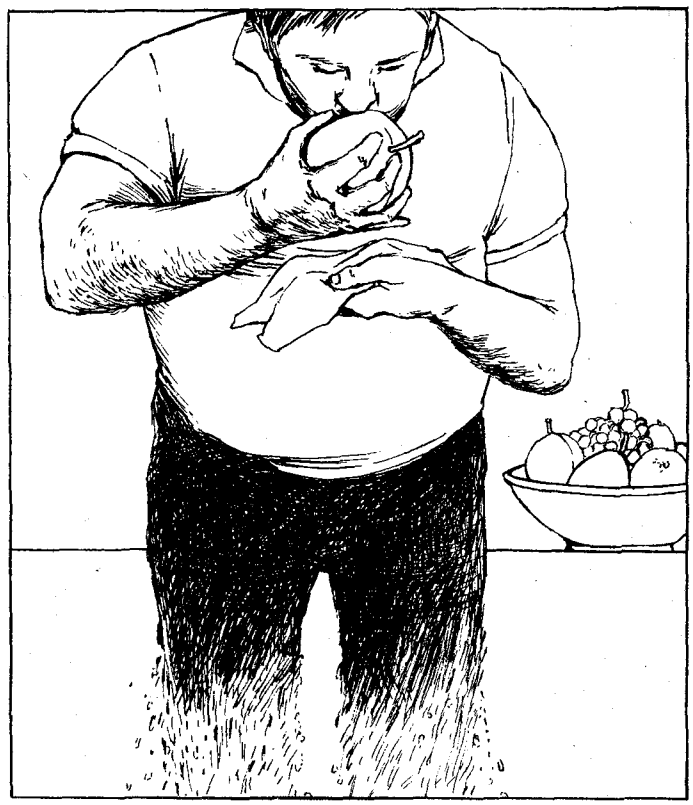
Ordinarily, a chlorinated hydrocarbon, chlordane, would have got the nod, but in Ohio, where Japanese beetles are prevalent, the bugs were becoming immune to it. In addition, it had been tagged as a carcinogen. Confronted with a limited choice of superpotent pesticides the bugs hadn't adapted to, the panel settled on a jawbreaking compound: O-ethyl O-2-isopropoxycarbonylphenyl isopropylphosphoramidothioate, also known as isofenphos, Amaze and Oftanol. The last two are trade names for the concoctions used against the corn rootworm and the Japanese beetle, respectively.

Without fanfare, C.D.F.A. teams in white coveralls started spraying Sevin and spreading diazinon on pastures, gardens and fruit trees in the two Sacramento suburbs. A total of 4,450 homes in a four-and-a-half-square-mile area were scheduled for further treatment throughout the summer and fall—more spraying and the spreading of Oftanol granules on lawns. The C.D.F.A. strategy called for as many as six applications, with return visits likely in 1984.

Some residents in the targeted neighborhoods went along passively. Others tried to stop the C.D.F.A. teams. (Eight were arrested last year and two this year on charges of interfering with the spraying or resisting arrest.) To counter what they saw as a serious health threat posed by trespassers from the C.D.F.A., more than 500 resisters organized ACTION, Affiliated Citizens to Investigate Oftanol Now. Shortly after the first spraying, the group canvassed Orangevale and Fair Oaks and found 200 residents who said they suffered symptoms consistent with Sevin poisoning—vomiting, diarrhea, breathing problems, skin rashes and stomach cramps.

The group feared all three pesticides, especially Oftanol, which had never been used in California. As more information filtered through the veil of secrecy that shrouds pesticide formulations, their trepidation grew.

Oftanol, they found, is manufactured by Mobay Chemical in Kansas City, Missouri, a subsidiary of the West



DRAWINGS BY KIMBERLY BULCKEN

Hal Rubin, a freelance writer based in California, specializes in environmental issues.

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German chemical firm Bayer AG. In 1980 the Environmental Protection Agency registered Oftanol for use in combating infestation of turf. On that basis the product was judged acceptable in every state but California, which has tougher pesticide requirements than the E.P.A. According to James Knaak, a C.D.F.A. toxicologist, Mobay had begun to apply for California registration in 1978 but had never completed the process. It had filed test data with the department but the documents were not made public.

Although Oftanol lacked a California registration and unregistered pesticides are *verboten*, Gov. George Deukmejian's administration and the C.D.F.A. approved its use in Orangevale and Fair Oaks under an obscure provision of the state's Administrative Code. Reflecting the lobbying clout of the $15 billion agriculture industry and the $900 million pesticide industry, Section 24-C provides for "local need" registration in special situations when the C.D.F.A. wants to use a pesticide that is not otherwise allowed.

By invoking Section 24-C, Governor Deukmejian kept the promise he had made to growers shortly after he succeeded Jerry Brown in 1983: they had a friend in the governor's office. But whether a Brown or a Deukmejian occupies that office, the director of the C.D.F.A. has traditionally been drawn from the agriculture industry. Director Clare Berryhill, a rancher who worked as a lobbyist for winegrape growers before Deukmejian appointed him in 1983, is no exception. Perhaps that helps explain why California, which absorbs 25 percent of all pesticides used nationwide, can't seem to get off the pesticide treadmill.

Up against a hostile Governor and an agriculture department beholden to the industry it is supposed to regulate, ACTION members felt as if they were shooting arrows at tanks. They lacked funding and political leverage, but they found friends in Sacramento attorneys James Reed and Philip Fraley, who agreed to look into their situation. They also requested and received assistance from two professors at the nearby University of California campus at Davis: Wendell Kilgore, a toxicologist and an adviser to the E.P.A., and Wallace D. Winters, a faculty member at the School of Medicine and founder of its Poison Control Center.

ACTION spokeswoman Eleanore Wootton says that Kilgore and Winters provided the group with badly needed credibility; the media suddenly stopped portraying the activists as hysterical kooks. In August, Reed and Fraley filed suit in Sacramento Superior Court to restrain further applications of Oftanol in the two suburbs. The Governor and the director of the Department of Food and Agriculture were among those named as defendants.

The lawyers argued that Kilgore and Winters should be given access to the confidential Mobay data in the C.D.F.A. library. The judge agreed and issued an order to that effect. What Kilgore and Winters gleaned from the documents bore out their concerns about the potential toxicity of the compound and the ineffectiveness of available antidotes to it. Despite those findings the court ruled against ACTION, and the C.D.F.A., which had stopped its Oftanol applications pending judgment, immediately resumed them.

In an attempt to defuse the situation, the Deukmejian administration and the C.D.F.A. handed out a $25,000 contract to Prof. Barry W. Wilson, a biologist at the Avian Sciences Department at Davis, to make an independent study of antidotes to Oftanol. Wilson had been researching the effects of organophosphates on nerves and muscles for more than a decade, so he brought considerable expertise to the Oftanol investigation. Even before he completed tests of the pesticide on chickens, rats and guinea pigs, he hit on something unexpected. Contrary to Mobay's data his tests indicated that atropine sulfate and 2-PAM are reasonably satisfactory antidotes to Oftanol.

In the process of testing antidotes to Oftanol, Wilson made an ominous discovery. Chickens that recovered from the effects of high-level doses of Oftanol showed symptoms of paralysis twelve to twenty-four days after the initial dose. Evidently the pesticide had a delayed effect on the nervous system, a propensity which presumably had escaped detection under standard pesticide screening procedures with acute doses required by the E.P.A.

Unless nerve damage appears with the acute test, the E.P.A. does not require firms to conduct more expensive and time-consuming tests with subacute doses. Such extended testing can determine the presence of low-dose accumulations that lead to delayed paralysis. Since only some organophosphates have this characteristic, subacute testing is crucial. While Mobay did perform the single acute-dose test on Oftanol, it did not do the subacute test for neurotoxicity.

Wilson's short-term contract did not allow for extended low-dose testing either; nevertheless, he was able to show the delayed effect of Oftanol. He and his students detected the neuropathy during tests of antidotes with high doses of isofenphos. They then doubled back and, using a technique developed by British scientist Martin Johnson, determined the compound's potential to cause delayed neuropathy. (The E.P.A. recommends the Johnson method, but the industry is not compelled to use it and Mobay didn't until 1983, three years after Oftanol had been registered.)

Test animals progressively lost coordination of their leg muscles and eventually became paralyzed. Post-mortems disclosed lesions in the peripheral nervous system and degeneration of the myelin which forms sheaths around certain nerves. Those symptoms are typical of organophosphate-induced delayed neuropathy. In a letter dated December 28, 1983, Wilson warned the C.D.F.A. of his findings before the research was completed. "Better to be premature," he said, "than to have the state and the public risk far more than reputations."

Within a week of receiving Wilson's letter, the C.D.F.A. temporarily halted the use of Oftanol. At first it considered having Wilson conduct the extended testing program at subacute dose levels. Then it changed course and contacted the E.P.A. which gave the responsibility to Mobay. Oftanol will not be available for use in California during the 1984 summer growing season because Mobay will need at least nine months to run its tests and analyze the data. Despite the

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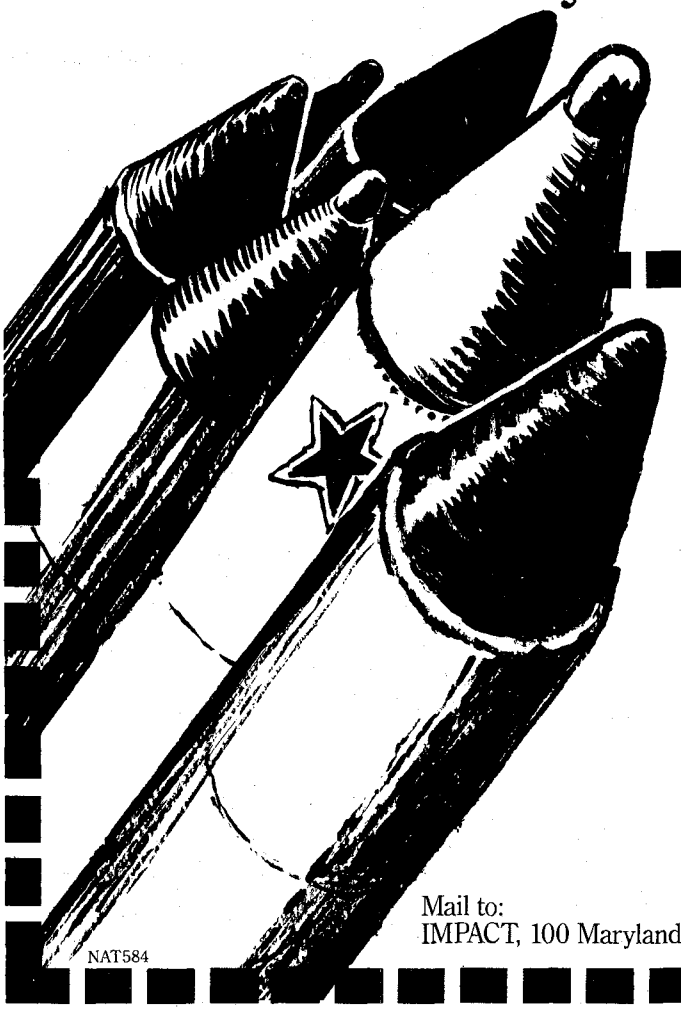

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dramatic developments in California, the E.P.A. has not canceled its four-year-old registration of Oftanol. According to Mobay, it is still available in every other state except Alaska.

Meanwhile, although the C.D.F.A. has not found a single Japanese beetle since last August, it continues to pursue the insect. Last year it spread and sprayed a total of 9,996 pounds of formulated diazinon and 5,382 pounds of Sevin in Orangevale and Fair Oaks. This spring it applied another three doses of diazinon to lawns in the two suburbs, and it plans even more extensive applications of Sevin from now through August. ACTION has retaliated by filing a suit to stop further applications of the pesticides and to require that the group's experts have access to any new test data Mobay submits if the C.D.F.A. attempts to invoke Section 24-C again in behalf of Oftanol.

As a result of the Oftanol affair, a number of bills have been introduced in the legislature that could affect the registration process for pesticides in California. The mounting pressure is forcing Governor Deukmejian and the C.D.F.A. to deal with two questions that many scientists and private citizens are now asking: Of the 1,400 especially toxic pesticides registered in the state, how many were approved for use before they were adequately tested? And how many California residents will suffer their harmful effects? □

GUATEMALAN REFUGEES

Will Mexico's 'Welcome' Last?

JULIE BRILL

On April 30 unidentified gunmen slipped into the El Chupadero refugee camp in southern Mexico, only a mile from the Guatemalan border. They opened fire, killing six and wounding six others. Two days later the Mexican government announced that it would move El Chupadero and eighty-six camps like it deeper into Mexico, though it did not say where or when.

About 46,000 refugees live in those remote camps administered by the Mexican government and funded mainly by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. They represent only half the number of Guatemalans who have sought safety in Mexico since 1981, when their government began burning villages and massacring inhabitants in areas under guerrilla control, as part of a counterinsurgency drive that continues today. Although there have been occasional raids like the one at El Chupadero, the Mexican camps have provided the refugees with a relative haven from the civil war and mounting political violence in Guatemala.

Julie Brill is a student at New York University School of Law. She recently returned from a five-month stay in Mexico, where she investigated the refugee situation for Americas Watch.

The Mexican government decided to move the camps ostensibly in order to provide better security, food, medicine and services for the refugees, but implementing that decision could have other consequences as well. With the refugees out of the area, the Mexicans could tighten security along the 180-mile border that separates the two countries, thus making entry into Mexico much more difficult for the thousands of Guatemalans who will no doubt seek refuge in the months ahead. By uprooting the refugees—some of whom have lived in the camps for three years—the Mexican government could also be taking the first step in a larger plan that would lead to the return of the refugees to Guatemala. The possibility of that increases as their position in Mexico is made less stable.

Before the most recent decision the government had appeared to be leaning toward repatriation of the refugees. On January 9 it announced the formation of a special commission with Guatemala to "resolve the refugee problem." Three days later, a government spokesman said that repatriation was being studied. All the factors that point to it—legal constraints that make official recognition of the refugees difficult, factionalism within the Mexican government and the country's severe economic problems—remain as compelling as they were then.

The Guatemalan government would no doubt enthusiastically welcome the return of the refugees; the bad publicity stemming from their presence in Mexico has only added to Guatemala's pariah status in the international community. And as ever the Reagan Administration stands ready to aid its ally. In a March 9 memorandum, the State Department informed members of the Senate that if the refugees return to Guatemala, the United States is "prepared to assist in meeting their basic needs for food, shelter and medical treatment."

But the Mexican government's decision to relocate the refugees indicates that, at least for now, their imminent return to Guatemala is unlikely. While some reports, including one in *The New York Times,* interpreted the decision as a resolution of the refugee situation, at best it is a holding action. It fails to address the central dilemma that has deeply divided Mexican officials since the refugees began to arrive: Should the government officially recognize these people and try to integrate them into Mexican society, or should it send them back to Guatemala?

Officially, Mexico espouses an open-door policy under which it grants asylum to all who flee political persecution. Thousands of urban, upper- and middle-class exiles from Spain after the Civil War and from the dictatorships of Chile and Argentina took advantage of that policy. But legally almost all the Guatemalans who have fled to Mexico are considered not "political asylees" but refugees, with no permanent immigration status. They are mostly rural Indians who left the country fearing for their life after members of their family experienced the viciousness of the military government. Rarely can they prove the direct political involvement necessary for political asylee status, and Mexico, like the United States, does not officially recognize refugees. As Alfredo Witschi, the U.N. High Commissioner's pro-

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gram officer supervising refugee camps in the state of Chiapas, put it, "Mexico still has not ratified the U.N.'s Convention on Refugees. In Mexico, '*refugiado*' is just a Spanish word."

In May 1982, Diana Torres Arciniega, then a high-level official in the Interior Ministry, explained why Mexico does not officially recognize the Guatemalans. They come "looking for relocation and work," she said, and their presence causes "a rise in delinquency," "a rise in the demand for jobs," "displacement of Mexican nationals" and "friction and irritation among Mexicans," among other problems. Still, Mexico admits the refugees under FM-8 visas, which formerly allowed Guatemalan laborers to pick produce within fifty miles of the border for up to three months. This bureaucratic device lets them into the camps administered by the Comision Mexicana de Asistencia a los Refugiados (COMAR) but denies them legal status in the country.

The United Nations has tried to push Mexico to recognize at least some of the Guatemalans, but the numbers bespeak the Interior Ministry's response. In 1982, the U.N.'s office on refugees selected 242 of the most promising cases from the thousands brought to it each year, and Interior granted legal status to the refugees in 72 of them; in 1983, Interior approved legal status for those in 15 of the 300 cases referred to it.

Some officials at the refugee office would like to put more international pressure on Mexico to grant the refugees permanent status, but the Mexican government has indicated that such action is unwelcome. Pierre Jambor, who until recently headed the refugee office's operations in Mexico, was declared persona non grata by officials there because of his zealous advocacy of the refugees' cause. Equally important, some U.N. officials do not want to risk an international brouhaha that might cause Mexico to pull back from its vital role in the Contadora group's search for peace in Central America.

For their part, many Mexican officials, especially those in the Interior Ministry, feel that the refugee office has already interfered too much in the internal affairs of the country. Interior represents one side in the debate taking place in the Mexican government over how to respond to the refugee problem. Interior Secretary Manuel Bartlett, a close friend of President Miguel de la Madrid, and Mario Vallejo, Director of Migratory Affairs and until recently also head of COMAR, take a nationalistic view. They and other Interior officials see the refugees as an economic burden. As one Mexican relief worker says, "Bartlett would be happy to see all the refugees go home."

The other side is represented by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which considers Mexico's policy with an eye toward the international community's response. The ministry was particularly embarrassed, for instance, over Interior's deportation of 2,400 Guatemalan refugees in the summer of 1981. Like their Secretary, Bernardo Sepúlveda, many officials in Foreign Affairs come from academia and see the influx of refugees as a social phenomenon, a natural outgrowth of severe civil strife in Central America.

Many observers felt that the decision to move the camps indicated that Foreign Affairs was winning Mexico's intergovernmental tug of war—at least for now. But the fact that Bartlett announced the move could mean that it is part of Interior's long-term strategy. The disastrous condition of the Mexican economy is one factor that may bolster the Interior Ministry's position, creating pressure to send the refugees back to Guatemala. The devaluation of the peso, currently at the rate of thirteen centavos a day against the dollar, has caused rampant capital flight from the country; meanwhile, Mexico's economic albatross, its foreign debt, requires the government to export unfathomable sums of its precious hard currency. Prices for many basic goods in Mexico rose 100 percent or more during 1983. The situation is especially grave in the state playing reluctant host to the refugees. Chiapas has always been one of the poorest states in the country, and improvement in the near future is unlikely. According to the government, the unemployment rate in rural states like Chiapas will reach 30 percent this year.

While the 46,000 Guatemalan refugees in the camps are the most visible strain on the economy, the government also worries about the nearly 50,000 refugees in Chiapas who are outside the camp system. Eighty-five percent of them are Guatemalan; most of the remainder are from El Salvador. Unlike their compatriots in the camps, almost all those refugees—whether they have come because of political or economic reasons—must depend on private humanitarian agencies until they find work on plantations.

Guatemalans have always been in great demand on the large coffee *fincas* in southern Chiapas: the men earn between $2 and $3 for a fourteen-hour day of hard labor; women receive even less. But the refugees' relative success at inserting themselves in the local farm economy clearly piques Mexican officials in southern Chiapas. Last October

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local immigration officials launched a campaign to rid the area of all illegal Central Americans. They stepped up their border patrol checks of vehicles on the main roads in the area and expanded their searches on the *fincas*. The local officials consider all refugees outside the camps economic migrants who are in the country illegally. For the last five months, about sixty Central Americans have been deported every day from southern Chiapas. Lieut. Javier Salazar Salazar, whom Vallejo brought in from the army to supervise this task, described his activities to the press: "A few days ago I deported 300 prostitutes who had invaded our zone of tolerance. Our duty is to protect the jobs of Mexicans."

What happens to the refugees sent back to Guatemala? According to an official in the Guatemalan agency for migration, each deportee "is investigated by the [Guatemalan] authorities, and if he doesn't have stories that go by the books, they take formal legal steps with his entrance documents." It is difficult to take that statement at face value, given the Guatemalan government's proven record of murdering and causing the disappearance of its citizens. In 1982 Guatemala headed Amnesty International's list of human rights abusers, and Americas Watch has reported that since the coup last August which placed Gen. Oscar Mejía Victores in power, political violence has increased in the cities.

Unfortunately for the refugees, Mexico's normally liberal foreign policy has not been evident in its dealings with the Guatemalan government. In fact, some observers feel that the decision to move the camps is Mexico's attempt to clear the border of "suspected guerrillas" and thus avoid confrontations with Guatemala. Mexicans fear that the Guatemalan conflict could spread across the border and that the opposition forces in Guatemala could find a sympathetic ear among the impoverished Chiapanecos. Any official Mexican support of the opposition forces would bring certain retaliation from the Guatemalan Army. Perhaps more important, the Mexican government wants to exploit the rich natural resources along its southern border, developing oil, hydroelectric power and coffee industries, and that will require the cooperation of Guatemala. As a result, Mexico has been conspicuously silent about the military regime's brutal policies.

Guatemala and the United States maintain that the refugees are beginning to return voluntarily to Guatemala, under an amnesty program announced by Gen. Mejía Victores. The refugees dispute such statements, repeatedly asserting that they neither know nor have heard of anyone who has recently returned. One refugee said, "I understand that when they announced the amnesty some went back because of their land or property left behind. The authorities gave them some time, but later they were eliminated. I don't know anyone who would return now."

Whether the Mexican government moves the refugees to the interior of the country or whether they stay on the border, the central question is, How long will they be able to remain in Mexico at all? One close associate of several high-level officials in the Mexican government says it is "unthinkable" that the refugees would be sent back. But Beatriz Manz, an anthropologist at Radcliffe's Bunting Institute and a longtime observer of Guatemala and Mexico, fears that the economic and political pressures on the Mexican government may force it to make a "quick deal" with Guatemala. "This could amount to the return of the refugees in exchange for no more than Guatemala's agreement to talk to Contadora."

A refugee relief worker in Mexico who wants the government and the international community to press Guatemala much further said Mexico "should return no refugees until the safety and human rights of the refugees are guaranteed." But considering its human rights record, could the Guatemalan regime's guarantees be trusted? □

THE COFFEE PUSHERS

Hooking America On Caffeine

ALFIE KOHN

General Foods, which sells almost 40 percent of the coffee drunk in America (Maxwell House, Sanka, Brim, Yuban), has long been at war with Proctor & Gamble (Folger's, High Point), whose market share is just over 20 percent. It has been a costly war for dozens of small roasters, who have been driven out of business by savage price competition. But now the behemoths and the smaller survivors have joined forces to combat a problem they share: the alarming number of young people who manage to get through a day with little or no coffee.

Three-quarters of Americans over the age of 10 drank the beverage in 1962; today about half in that age group are regular coffee drinkers. For those in their 20s the disparity is even greater: twenty-two years ago 81 percent had the coffee habit, while today only 43 percent do. The decline has bottomed out in the last few years, but from the viewpoint of the coffee industry far too many teen-agers and young adults prefer carbonated sugar water to boiled bean juice. Through its trade group, the National Coffee Association (N.C.A.), the industry has taken action.

Its $20 million advertising campaign, begun last fall and expected to continue for many years, is explicitly aimed at young people. To the sound of pop music ("Hold on Tight to Your Dream"), television viewers are informed that they are "the new American society," which means "the new coffee generation." Quarterback Ken Anderson, singer David Bowie, actresses Cicely Tyson and Jane Curtin, writer Kurt Vonnegut and others are shown doing what they're best known for—and slurping mugfuls of coffee. The announcer intones: "Coffee is the calm moment that

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lets you think. Coffee gives you the time to dream it. Then you're ready to do it. No other drink does that like coffee. Join the coffee achievers."

Lois Geraci Ernst, president of Advertising to Women, which designed the campaign, conducted surveys and concluded that "hard work is back in fashion." Her ads suggest that coffee energizes us to do that work but somehow relaxes us at the same time.

The coffee achievers ads came only a year after General Foods unveiled its own $35 million campaign, with the tag line "Good to the Last Drop Feelings." Gone are the angst-ridden middle-aged housewives desperately struggling to brew a cup of coffee that would make their husbands sit up and take notice. In their place are Ray Charles on the soundtrack and lots of young people on the screen. "This new approach seeks to touch a nerve, to bring a tear to people's eyes," said Harvey Gabor, who helped create the ads. "We're talking about the wonderful experience of coffee drinking."

Not a bad hype for a product with no nutritional value, whose most important ingredient is an addictive drug that tends to make users nervous and irritable. Recent research has discovered this about caffeine:

§ As little as two cups of coffee can produce irregular or very rapid heartbeats, according to a study published in *The New England Journal of Medicine.* For individuals with congenital heart problems, that can be dangerous.

§ An extensive and carefully controlled Norwegian study found that, depending on how much they drank, coffee drinkers had 5 to 11 percent more cholesterol in their blood than nondrinkers.

§ The link between caffeine and birth defects is well established enough that even the conservative Food and Drug Administration, in a pamphlet titled "Caffeine and Pregnancy," warns expectant mothers to cut down on coffee. The agency is considering taking caffeine off its list of food ingredients labeled "Generally Recognized As Safe."

§ Other research has suggested that caffeine may affect central nervous system development, is a likely cause of benign breast lumps and might be linked to pancreatic cancer.

Since Royal Crown began marketing a caffeine-free cola in 1980, other soft drink companies have followed suit. Decaffeinated coffee, meanwhile, accounts for 30 percent of the instant and 10 percent of the ground coffee market—an increase from the late 1970s that one industry source calls enormous. Clearly, the public has begun to back off from caffeine. Yet the N.C.A. ads are trying to win over the youth market by promoting the remarkable productivity supposedly induced by the drug.

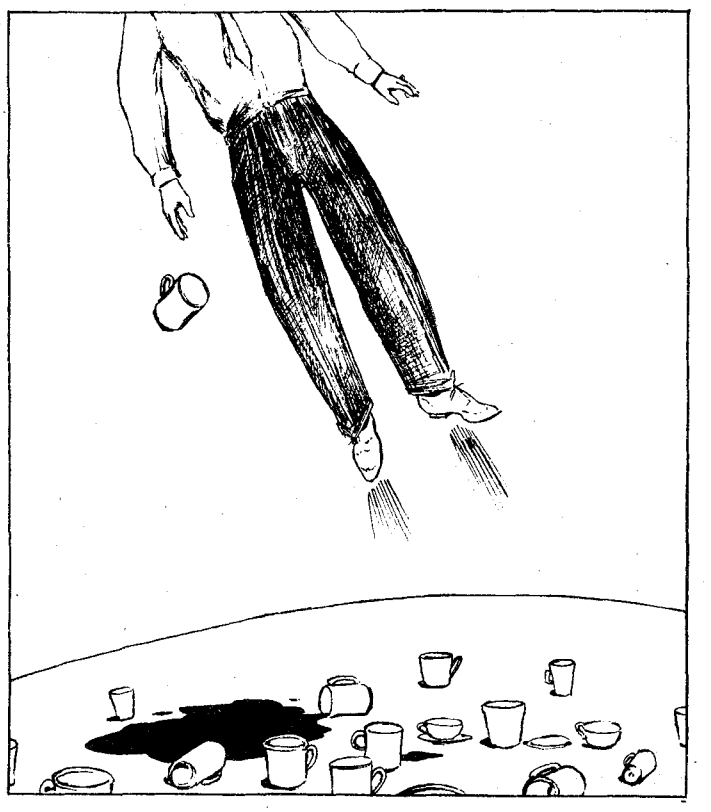
The Center for Science in the Public Interest (C.S.P.I.) was particularly outraged by the original ad copy, which declared, "Coffee lets you calm yourself down and picks you up." In a petition to the Federal Trade Commission and a complaint before the National Advertising Division of the Council of Better Business Bureaus, C.S.P.I. argued that there is nothing calming about coffee, that much about it is dangerous and that drinking it does not make people successful.

In response to the first argument, N.C.A. spokesman William J. Brooks explains impatiently, "It's the coffee *break*, the coffee-drinking experience, [that's relaxing]. Anybody who reads it otherwise is not looking at the English." Besides, he insists, "The ads say, 'Coffee lets *you* calm yourself down.' It's not the coffee doing it. You're doing it yourself when you sit down with a warm cup of coffee and put your hands around it."

Bruce Silverglade, legal director for C.S.P.I., is not impressed. "If they meant the coffee break, they should have said it," he responds. "And second, it's not the coffee that's calming; it's the time off from work. If anything, the coffee will certainly counteract the calming effect of a work break."

After a meeting with the Better Business Bureau's National Advertising Division, the N.C.A. modified the wording of the ads—although Brooks insists that changes were already in the works. The C.S.P.I. is far from satisfied, but the F.T.C. will probably continue to ignore its petition asking that the ads be pulled, according to Silverglade. "We've seen the demise of the F.T.C. as an enforcement agency for all practical purposes," he says.

Silverglade is bitter about the commission's general inaction on misleading food advertisements. After an eight-year development period, an F.T.C. proposal for industrywide regulation of such ads was withdrawn in late 1982. The commission promised a vigorous case-by-case program in its place, but it issued only two complaints in 1983. While C.S.P.I. has found serious problems with claims made for Diet Coke, Campbell's Soups and Del Monte's canned vegetables, the F.T.C. prefers to examine what Silverglade calls "small, fly-by-night companies"—when it does any examining at all.



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The $4.5 billion coffee industry presumably does not qualify as a fly-by-night operation, and its ad campaign is therefore likely to continue. If such commercials bring on a headache, though, you might think twice before reaching for an Anacin or Excedrin. They contain caffeine too. □

Mobutu

(*Continued From Front Cover*)

to want to sell those items to whoever will pay.

What *could* change, though, if Zaire replaces its leadership, is who gets the money. And in that, the interests of Western banks and governments are intertwined in ways the public little realizes. In fact, an analysis of Zaire's $6.5 billion foreign debt shows that almost none of it arises from anything that much benefited the Zairian people, who are being slowly starved to pay it off.

For example, companies and banks run by relatives of former French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing are pulling billions of dollars out of the Zairian and other African economies. Those banks have lent a lot of money, secured by Africa's minerals, but most of it never reached Africa; it was forwarded to European manufacturing companies connected to the family. The companies built high-priced showpieces in Africa that the people didn't need, at what apparently was considerable profit for the Europeans. In the case of Zaire, contracts for skyscrapers and other lavish buildings, and a billion-dollar satellite and microwave communications system, all involving Giscard's family interests, account for close to one-third of the foreign debt (much of which is made up of mounting finance costs). Contracts for the communications systems and the fancy buildings were awarded during the presidency of Giscard, who twice sent French troops to Zaire to protect the Mobutu government.

Belgium, another country whose military regularly bails out Mobutu, also holds roughly one-third of the Zairian debt. It mainly involves the banking and industrial trust Société Général du Belgique, which in colonial days owned many of Zaire's mines and now runs them on contract. Société Général is in large part owned by the King of Belgium as a personal business venture. It has myriad ties to other political leaders in Brussels. As one investigates those holdings, the availability of Western troops to support the government of Zaire becomes less surprising.

In 1980, reporters for the Belgian weekly *Humo* combed land and tax records in their country and documented long-standing rumors about the lavish European real estate holdings of President Mobutu and his inner circle. The records they found, not necessarily complete, show that "Joseph Desire Mobutu-Gbiatwa, address: Kinshasa, occupation: chief of state," owns two houses, a chateau, a park, stables and an undeveloped property, all in Belgium. Judging from photographs published in *Humo*, a Vanderbilt or a Rockefeller could call a couple of them home. One is a veritable castle, replete with spires and surrounded by a moat, some twenty-five miles outside Brussels. Mobutu's relatives and various government officials he appointed were also listed as owners of apartment buildings and large tracts of land in Belgium.

Other secrets of Mobutu's reign were flowing out of Kinshasa, as a few people began to talk. Instead of disappearing and never being heard from again, some former government officials dumped by Mobutu moved to Brussels or Geneva and began holding press conferences. Among them were Ngouza Karl-i-bond, the Prime Minister and former Finance Minister, and Bernardin Mungul-Diaka, another former Cabinet minister, who had also served as executive secretary of Zaire's only political party (founded by Mobutu). Both men gave the Belgian press detailed accounts of corruption.

Mungul-Diaka released a list of Mobutu's European holdings. It estimated the value of Mobutu's Belgian real estate—the same holdings documented by official records—at about $100 million. Mobutu also had $143 million in a Swiss bank and a $5.4 million chateau in Cully, on Lake Geneva.

The list included villas in Paris (valued at $1.1 million) and Nice ($1.3 million) and chateaus in Spain, Italy and the Central African Republic (the last, valued at $17.9 million, is apparently part of a vast private hunting preserve which the C.A.R.'s Emperor Bokassa gave to then President Giscard d'Estaing and his circle, including Mobutu). Mobutu also owns hotels in Spain and the Ivory Coast, tourist homes in Greece and residences and properties in Senegal and the Ivory Coast. If he is ever toppled he will have no trouble finding refuge.

Three pages were required to enumerate Mobutu's Zairian properties, and another page and a half to name companies in Zaire that are allegedly controlled by Mobutu but held in the names of two uncles and a friend. Among the holdings that Mungul-Diaka listed was a majority share in the diamond-buying agencies in Western Kasai province.

Mobutu the President is obviously in a position to grant useful franchises and other conveniences to Mobutu the businessman. If this seems untoward, it's only fair to note that Zaire's model of modern government was Belgium, where the king is allowed all sorts of secret control over semimonopolistic private businesses, many of which owned the natural resources of Zaire throughout the colonial period. One of them is Société Général.

On November 1, 1980, a group of dissidents in Parliament anonymously published a fifty-page open letter to Mobutu. The letter politely but forthrightly accused him of suppressing his people's liberties and welshing on his promise to improve their economic lot. The same parliamentarians are also suspected of providing information con-

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Jonathan Kwitny is a reporter for The Wall Street Journal. *This article is excerpted from his book,* Endless Enemies: America's Worldwide War Against Her Own Best Interests, *published this month by Congdon & Weed.* © *Copyright 1984 by Jonathan Kwitny.*

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tained in a report issued by two Belgian human rights groups in February 1981.

The report challenged Mobutu's account of the July 1979 killing of diamond scavengers just outside Mbuji-Mayi, the diamond center of Eastern Kasai province. Against Mobutu's assertion that only three people were killed when the army swooped down, the human rights groups named ninety-seven persons who died in the massacre. They also identified ten persons who had been killed in a previously unreported massacre near Mbuji-Mayi two weeks earlier. Shortly after the open letter to Mobutu was disseminated in Europe, thirteen members of Parliament were arrested and charged with writing it. With minimal legal formalities, Mobutu sentenced them to five years under house arrest.

The most prominent of the group was Tshisekedi wa Mulumba, one of several Zairians known to have been courted by U.S. diplomats, who had the idea in mind that someday a successor to Mobutu might be needed. Tshisekedi and his twelve compatriots probably would have faced a fate much worse than house arrest had it not been for the Mbuji-Mayi massacre. When Amnesty International couldn't get into Zaire to investigate the massacre under terms it considered satisfactory, it launched a full-scale campaign against human rights violations there. In the glare of that campaign, Mobutu became much more cautious in his treatment of opponents.

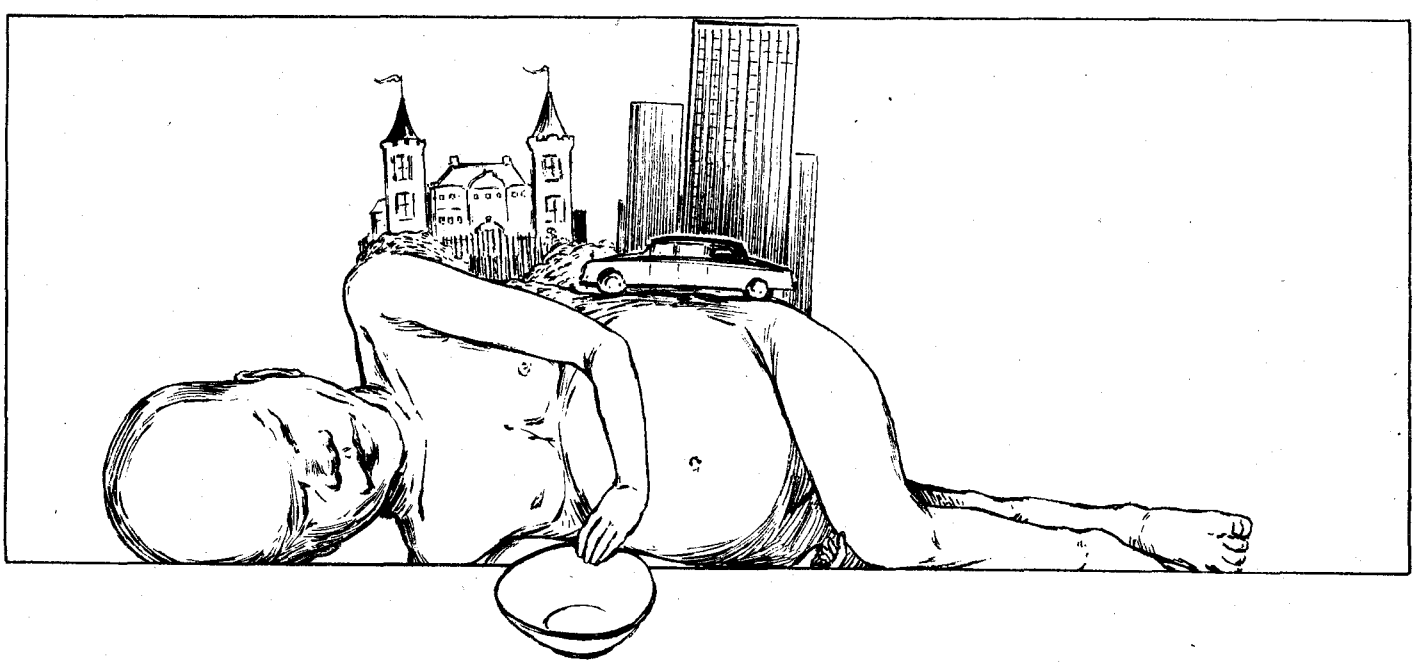
In May 1980, Amnesty International said that Mobutu's violations included:

- The detention without charge or trial of suspected opponents of the government for long periods.
- The imprisonment of political prisoners convicted at trials which did not conform with internationally recognized standards.
- The use of torture.
- The frequency of deaths in detention resulting from torture, ill-treatment and harsh prison conditions.
- The use of the death penalty in both criminal and political cases and extrajudicial executions.

Among the documents that reached the Belgian press in 1980 were apparently accurate records from a committee of the Zairian Parliament assigned to supervise the national bank. The records indicate that Mobutu was being hypocritical back in December 1979, when he stunned his people by announcing tough financial restrictions designed to please the International Monetary Fund. The austerity measures were presented as a condition for loans to help Zaire pay the interest on its $6.5 billion foreign debt. They abolished people's right to spend their savings or to convert Zairian money to foreign currency. In the same year that he imposed those measures, Mobutu withdrew 364.3 million Belgian francs from the Zairian national bank, the equivalent of more than $13 million. Members of his family withdrew $209,000 in various Western currencies. In the previous two years, the records show, Mobutu and his relatives had withdrawn $2.8 million in U.S. cash, $132.1 million in Belgian francs, $6.4 million in French francs and $268,000 in Swiss francs, a total worth some $141.6 million. Mobutu could also acquire enormous funds from European and U.S. businessmen willing to pay bribes, commissions or whatever they may be euphemistically called, for the favorable terms they received on their dealings in Zaire.

Everyone, from U.S. diplomats in Europe and Kinshasa to Western businessmen making money in Zaire, acknowledges the huge kickbacks. Often they are paid by deposit in banks in Europe or the United States, before the money goes on the books of the Bank of Zaire—thus before hostile parliamentarians or the I.M.F. can find out about them. Zaire is far from being the only nation in which bribes are part of the fabric of doing business. U.S.-supported dictators around the world conduct business via kickbacks. Only rarely can the corruption be cited in its particulars, because the culprits can cover their tracks in too many ways. Still, the Mobutus get their castles and their overseas bank accounts.

Such thievery not only strips Third World countries of needed money; it guarantees that the market will not be able to determine where resources are to be applied. That further sabotages development. And the system, devised largely by



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Western governments, including the United States, seems designed to tempt if not actually to encourage venality.

The Central Intelligence Agency actively strives to find up-and-coming foreign officials who are susceptible to bribery. The Economic Intelligence Committee of the C.I.A. publishes a frequently updated Economic Alert List for each region of the world, telling U.S. spies what to watch for. Along with obvious queries on energy use and food supply, the lists call for information on bribeability. For example, the list for Africa for the period October 1981 to March 1982 (obtained with the help of John Kelly, editor of *Counterspy* magazine) gives the following priority instructions to spies in Zaire: "Reporting on military corruption has been exceptional; keep it flowing. Try to supplement the flow with more reporting on civilian corruption, including names and positions."

When the time comes for the C.I.A. to select a man to push for high office in some foreign government, bribability is obviously an asset. Whatever other pressures might come to bear on a ruler at a time of decision, the United States can be confident that if the contest is won by graft, the C.I.A. will be able to outbid any rival. And once someone starts taking money, there is always the threat of exposure to insure continued cooperation.

U.S. businesses are sometimes used as conduits for C.I.A. bribe money. Corporations pay sales commissions to front men for the foreign rulers who purchase U.S. goods on behalf of their governments. U.S. intelligence agencies regularly grant private companies exemptions from the requirement that they disclose questionable foreign payments; those exemptions, granted for "national security" reasons, are tacit admissions that the U.S. government uses private companies to bribe foreign nationals and influence the politics of foreign countries. Not only management is involved: for at least thirty-five years the A.F.L.-C.I.O. passed C.I.A. and other U.S. government funds to important foreigners to influence their political actions.

A 1975 Senate subcommittee investigation into payoffs by multinational corporations uncovered a lot of apparently illegal money transfers. It was originally assumed that those payments were a form of commercial bribery, but there's good reason to suspect that many payments weren't commercial bribes at all but rather C.I.A. payoffs channeled under corporate cover. A disproportionate percentage of the payments were made by arms companies like Northrop and Lockheed, which work closely with the C.I.A. and Defense Department because of the technology they use. More intriguing, a disproportionate percentage of the payments, even by companies not in the military-supply business, were made in countries on the perimeters of the Soviet Union and China, and in countries, like Italy and Japan, where Communist Parties are a strong political force. The money routinely went to political leaders, or their relatives, who were avowed anti-Communists.

Another enticement to corruption is the way the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and most private Western lending institutions work. Their loans don't depend on the viability of the projects they are asked to finance. Proposals for projects to be funded by the World Bank are often prepared by companies seeking contracts (and therefore money), rather than by local citizens' groups or development workers or the World Bank itself or the governments that are supposedly receiving the loans. The company and the government make their deal before anyone else is consulted, which opens the door for collusion and kickback arrangements, and forecloses any possibility of fair competitive bidding on a project.

In 1978 the World Bank undertook a $9 million project to refurbish Zaire's palm oil plantations. Stated that way, it sounds like an appropriate enough investment. But the proposal was prepared by Unilever and two other Belgian companies that control most of Zaire's palm oil industry. Unilever is a giant international agricultural growing, processing, shipping and retailing firm. In Standard & Poor's stock guide, Unilever's "principal business" receives this grandiose description: "Controls vast international enterprise."

Why should the World Bank spend development money to beef up the balance sheet of one of the world's richest companies? The monthly wage of $7 to $13 that Unilever pays its local workers, from which it deducts rent for their slavelike quarters, certainly doesn't commend the company to the Zairians, who are supposed to benefit from the development aid. One would think that if Unilever considered the palm oil project viable, it would invest its own money. It probably would—lots of people would—if Zaire had an honest, popular, efficient government.

Another Belgian firm, Compagnie Sucrière, prepared an $80.4 million World Bank proposal in 1980 to improve its sugar plantation in Zaire and buy new processing equipment. The company agreed to put up one-third of the money to get the loan, and the bank went along. There has never been any evidence of kickbacks or other graft in connection with the Unilever or Compagnie Sucrière loans; there hasn't been much information of any kind available about them. We know only that both companies are very, very rich and so is Mobutu, and they all use public funds in secret. I have cited those two projects only because confidential World Bank documents describing them happened to pass into the hands of friendly sources; many other examples would be available if the World Bank made public the documents relating to the use of U.S. taxpayers' generous credit and cash. The International Monetary Fund is equally closemouthed about its operation.

The World Bank and the I.M.F. not only operate in secrecy; they practice active deception. Sanguine press releases are issued to conceal boardroom jitters. In 1980 the World Bank told the public that the deterioration of Zaire's economy had been "arrested." The I.M.F. reported the country had a positive growth rate of 1.8 percent that year. *IMF Survey*, the fund's bimonthly magazine, gave Zaire a juicy plug in the July 6, 1981, issue, announcing an extended credit agreement. The magazine, as usual, blamed Zaire's problems on the downturn in the copper market in 1975 and on some "structural maladjustments that developed." It

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praised Mobutu's courageous action in wiping out all his people's savings, describing the measure as part of "a comprehensive stabilization program." It said "significant progress was made under the program in 1980, especially in slowing the high rate of inflation."

Reading *IMF Survey*, one would never guess that Manoudou Toure, the Senegalese economist who headed the I.M.F. team in Zaire, had resigned out of frustration. In an interview in his Kinshasa office in the same year for which the I.M.F. was claiming "significant progress," Toure moaned that he couldn't control the illegal outflow of wealth from the country. Nor, he said, could he tell how much Sozacom, the minerals marketing agency, turned over to Gecamines, the government agency that owns the mines. According to the expatriate professionals who help run it, Gecamines was consistently shortchanged by Sozacom.

"We are under the supervision of the Zairian authorities," Toure said. "The people who are powerful here, the people who export coffee and diamonds and so forth, are very shrewd, very full of technical resources to bypass the law." What of the illegal withdrawals by government officials and Mobutu's relatives, literally under Toure's nose? (His office was on the top floor of the national bank building.) "I cannot control that," he said.

Of course, the way the I.M.F. crowd explained it to *The New York Times*, graft may be the only thing that can bail out Zaire. In reporting the alleged 1.8 percent growth in the Zairian economy, *The Times* quoted an unnamed economist: "The reason was that goods could be imported with black money, and the economy grew." Mobutu, it was explained, had decided to allow more smuggling so that needed items could be imported. Carried to its logical conclusion, that means the I.M.F. currency and exchange restrictions are actually *impeding* development in Zaire.

While all that was going on, *West Africa* magazine reported that Mobutu had sold 200 tons of cobalt on the spot market in Switzerland and *Nouvel Economiste* disclosed that he had traded 10,000 tons of copper to South Africa—South Africa!—all off the books, without reporting it to Zaire's national bank or the I.M.F. The cobalt sale was said to be for the benefit of his country, to pay for some French buses to get people to work. The old British ones were rusting on the outskirts of Kinshasa, immobilized for lack of spare parts.

You could read similar stories in World Bank memorandums—but only if you worked for the World Bank. According to a leaked memo dated October 5, 1979, and marked "Confidential," the World Bank clearly knew that its public optimism was a lie. The memo complained not of the sub rosa sales in Switzerland and South Africa but of an off-the-books 20,000-ton copper sale to China, which was barely reported in the press.

"A review of Gecamines' books indicated a number of special transactions undertaken since January 1979 which have reduced Gecamines' cash flow during the period by US$49.4 million," it disclosed. Besides the Chinese copper sale, the memo pointed out that Gecamines had expended $5.3 million in foreign exchange, part of a plan to pay $59 million for the improvement of a single farm. The memo didn't identify the farm, but it sounded suspiciously like Mobutu's which, the Belgian press reported, received exactly one-half the nation's fertilizer imports and two-thirds of

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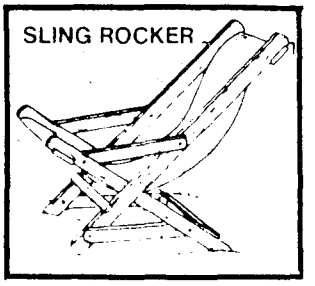

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The memo also noted that $25 million was drained from Gecamines for "two presidential centers," and that "a local construction firm involved with local political interests is attempting to secure the contracts without bidding at more than double the cost estimated by Gecamines."

For obvious reasons, Mobutu was not eager to discuss any of this. Requests for interviews both in Zaire and the United States went without reply. When I phoned or showed up at the palace, I was told not only that the President was unavailable but that no one in authority was available to speak for the President, or would be for weeks.

Another potential source of information that wasn't talking much was Société Général. The Belgian conglomerate has 250 subsidiaries which own stock in one another and make money from each other: a mining company in Société Général will ship its goods by a Société Général shipping company to a Société Général smelting company, and all will insure with a Société Général insurance company.

How much did Société Général get when it sold its mining interests in Zaire to the Zairian government? "It wasn't for nothing, but that I cannot tell you," said Jean Dachy, director general of the company's main mineral subsidiary. How much does Société Général make now by supplying Zaire with expertise, customers, shipping, smelting, insurance and who knows what else? "It's an agreement between two countries and I don't think I can give you any information about that."

Is the price Zaire gets for its minerals at least fair? "A lot of people have very loose opinions about that, but they don't know anything," said Dachy. "It's very dangerous to discuss this without understanding the whole arrangement. But I'm certainly not allowed to disclose that. We get something, they get something."

After President Reagan took office, a State Department official "who has been intimately involved in U.S. policy toward Zaire" told *The Washington Post* that the Administration wanted "to significantly increase military aid" to Mobutu. He said, "It is one of the few tools we have to exercise any leverage with the Zairians to get them to reform their government."

A year later, an unreformed Mobutu visited the United States accompanied by an entourage of eighty, including twenty-one children, some of them his own. After stopping off at Disney World in Florida, they traveled for a week, then stayed in New York City at the Waldorf-Astoria. The Mobutu party took over an entire floor of the hotel. The children received all their meals in the presidential suite, served by three hotel waiters and three Zairian servants.

In November 1982, Vice President George Bush visited Mobutu in Kinshasa. "I am pleased to announce that during my visit here the U.S.A. and Zaire have agreed to begin negotiations leading to a bilateral investment treaty," Bush declared. Reuters voiced the opinion that this signaled "an improvement of relations." The discussions took place aboard Mobutu's yacht. □

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BOOKS & THE ARTS.

Mary, Still Contrary

On May 3, Mary McCarthy was awarded the National Medal for Literature. What follows is an interview which Carol Brightman conducted with her in 1980 at McCarthy's summer house in Castine, Maine. In it the verbal animation and political resilience of McCarthy's essays and fiction are exercised on a variety of subjects, from American literary life to French feminism. —*The Editors*

CAROL BRIGHTMAN

Brightman: When you left the United States in 1960 was it because you felt you could no longer function as a writer in America?

McCarthy: I don't know if it was hard to function as a writer, but as a person, yes. I think there was a certain flight. I don't know if it was from America or from New York intellectual life. Before Jim [West] and I were married we were living in Warsaw, never sure we would ever get our divorces. I would have these dreams where we're sitting there in Warsaw, and we know a few Poles but we hardly see anybody, and I'm reading Hegel. I'm just sitting there reading Hegel. I really did develop a kind of horror of the sort of tinniness of New York intellectual and literary life.

Brightman: Did something happen around the end of the 1950s that made it difficult to be a part of that life?

McCarthy: What happened, of course, was the whole McCarthy period and the reaction to the McCarthy period, and both were terrible. The McCarthy period itself was worse, but the counter-hysteria was also sometimes very false and self-loving. I was involved with Dwight Macdonald's *Politics*. That had died. A great many things had died. Then I tried with some other people to start a magazine [*Critic*] that never got off the ground. *Critic* was a reaction against the McCarthy atmosphere and *The Nation*, *The New Republic* and *The Reporter*. They were just so dead, so weak and timid. A combination of hysteria and cowardice. I did some work for *The Reporter*, and I know how cowardly Max Ascoli was.

Brightman: In her book about you, *The Company She Kept*, Doris Grumbach described *Critic* as politically "middle of the road." What does that mean?

McCarthy: I don't know what that means. It certainly was to the left of *The Nation* and *The New Republic*, but we weren't all of the same views by any means. It had Nicola Chiaromonte, who was to me the most important figure, and Dwight Macdonald and Hannah Arendt and Arthur Schlesinger and Dick Rovere. They were certainly much more classically liberal, but they were also independent.

The problem for the new magazine, of course, was to get money. We figured we could do it for $28,000 a year. We had something quite inexpensive in mind. But as soon as I started trying to raise this money and seeing all these people, we immediately got involved in something much more expensive, because nobody would give me $1,000 unless I wanted to spend $50,000, and so our budget went up.

It was not going to be only political; there was going to be quite a strong cultural side—looking into phenomena that hadn't been looked into, like Levittowns, for example. And *The New Yorker* wasn't doing that kind of journalism then. Now it's more or less all been done.

Anyway, I finally succeeded in getting promises for about $60,000, and by that time I was completely broke. I had spent the whole winter working on this, so I hadn't earned any money. And I quit. It was all this business of pledges. The strange thing was that the only people who were truly helpful were Republicans—whereas the Democrats, they were awful. I remember when I first met with Marietta Tree, her opening remark was, "My dear, I'm flat as a pancake!"

Brightman: Meaning what, that she was——

McCarthy: Broke, yes. I was eating all this rich food and drinking cognac with these people and they were telling me they didn't have any money.

Brightman: Did you see working on this magazine as a way of making a connection between your writing life and your social concerns?

McCarthy: I've always had quite an attraction to communal enterprises and things guided by friendship, or I used to have anyway. And I thought we were going to have an awful lot of fun doing it. Then the usual thing developed; people became very hateful. I got word from Alfred Kazin that my quitting had been a betrayal. He hadn't done one thing; he hadn't given us the price of a postage stamp. So I went back to writing. I was working on *A Charmed Life* and doing magazine pieces like "My Confession," which was a reaction to [Whittaker] Chambers. When we didn't get anywhere with the magazine—and all that disappointment with the Democrats—I suppose that was very off-putting.

It was shortly after that that I got into doing the European books, the art books. That began in 1955. The Venice book [*Venice Observed*] happened by chance; then I did the Florence book [*The Stones of Florence*] on my own initiative. I had an absolutely marvelous time. I was very happy through all that. That was when I discovered what sculpture was all about. I discovered the ideas of art.

Brightman: What was it that you discovered?

McCarthy: That sculpture is civic: these are the pillars that uphold the civic life. Painting has a thin and flimsy quality by comparison. It has this element of witchcraft. Hannah Arendt was very helpful in these discussions. We used to go down to Princeton and listen to the Gauss lectures—she had given one set—and come back on the train, and we would have a lot of conversations on the difference between painting and sculpture. Until then, I had much preferred painting to sculpture.

Brightman: Do you still feel that way about sculpture?

McCarthy: The trouble with modern sculpture is that when it's bad it's so ugly; it's so big and ugly, much more so than painting, whose very flimsiness makes it somewhat harmless. There are a lot of those columnar and pillarlike forms in Brancusi's work at the Guggenheim, and suddenly you see all this and its relation to the idea of a republic. I think I am really a republican—I mean with a small "r." I've never liked those late Medici. I liked old Cosimo, the most democratic of the Medici or at least the simplest in his manners.

Carol Brightman is an associate editor of Geo *and co-author, with Larry Rivers, of* Drawings and Digressions *(Clarkson N. Potter).*

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Brightman: Wouldn't you describe yourself as a democrat with a small "d" for the same reason?

McCarthy: I've tried all my life to be a democrat, but I think I'm really a republican in this sense: I believe in the institutions of a republic, the protection of laws, starting with the protection of the rights of the individual. I have a great suspicion of the demos. Society needs the protection of institutions. Of course, things can reach a point where an outbreak of democracy is terribly exciting and liberating and oxygenating. But it doesn't seem to work out very well at the stage we're living in now.

Brightman: What stage would you say we are living in now? The institutions of this country seem very weak.

McCarthy: We're not living in a republican society at all.

Brightman: Certainly. But it's not a demos either.

McCarthy: It's more a demos of the belly. Even that isn't democratic, or rather it's not egalitarian, in that everybody is fed up to here, but the quality of what he's fed differs greatly. It's terrifying. There is satisfaction delivered in the form of cars, television and the usual packaged foods, convenience foods.

Brightman: That's just a holding action, don't you think?

McCarthy: No, I think it's forever. I've been going to supermarkets all my life and I've always wanted to write an article entitled "Let Them Eat Cake." Marie Antoinette had the right idea, from the point of view of those in power, about what to do with the plebs. Anyway, your heart leaps up when you see somebody taking out a bag of oranges.

Vietnam, Déjà Vu

Brightman: I read your essays in *The Seventeenth Degree* when they were first published in *The New York Review of Books*; I read them again recently and it seems to me they stand up as the only writing about Vietnam that actually shows Americans who the North Vietnamese leaders were as individuals. "To this fastidious man," you wrote of Pham Van Dong, "bombs were a low-grade intrusion into the political scene, which he conceived, like the ancients, as a vast proscenium." I think you captured his conservatism and audacity perfectly.

McCarthy: I suspect that Pham Van Dong's ascendancy at the time that you and I were there* had a lot to do with the fact that he was really the carrier of Ho Chi Minh's values and that with the death of Ho Chi Minh, Pham Van Dong became something of a figurehead. I haven't seen any of the Vietnamese that I used to know for years. They used to look me up in Paris, but I don't think they come there anymore. The last time I saw Nguyen Minh Vy was at the time of the carpet bombing when I went out to see what one could do, and he was rather ironical. I wanted to go to Hanoi and get bombed——

Brightman: What year was that? 1972?

McCarthy: Yes. I wanted to go to North Vietnam, and I was trying to get the Pope to go. I thought it would be great if the Pope got hit by an American bomb, and I don't mean it against the Pope, really. I was also trying to get the bishop of Harlem to go. I was trying to get various Americans to go but not one would touch it. It was like that magazine, exactly, a real *déjà vu*.

Brightman: People were retreating to their burrows then, weren't they?

McCarthy: And they had the most terrible excuses. Granted, it was a rather chimerical project, but you couldn't get one taker. Anyway I did go to see Vy and he said, "You don't want to go to Hanoi, you want to go to the White House." At any rate, in a few days it was over. And so, where are we?

Brightman: By your own account, Vietnam certainly succeeded in setting a great many American intellectuals into a kind of action we haven't seen since. It seems a long time ago. Getting back to your supermarket, I wonder if we've reached a stage where consumerism has become a substitute for either civic life or political life?

McCarthy: For a while the uprisings in Poland seemed to break that mold. Something could happen there. Poland was always my other touchstone. That's where Jim and I met, and before we got married I kept going back to Warsaw; we would have lived there, except things worked out differently. It wasn't the best period then, but a good deal of the spirit of the 1956 revolution was still there. The people had a marvelous sense of freedom which was electrifying, and they were fearless—unlike the Russians, I must say. The Poles believe that they're very prudent and cautious but they are not.

* Brightman was in Hanoi in 1967, McCarthy in 1968.

Brightman: That seems to change when they come to America, doesn't it?

McCarthy: The ethnics. The ethnics certainly do not seem to be a courageous people. It may be only the intellectual class who are—except that those young workers [in Solidarity] whose pictures appeared in the paper, I've never seen such handsome young men. Maybe it has something to do with not having all those consumer goods. You know, we haven't had a worker in this country that looked like that in fifty years. Railway men used to be very good-looking in this country, very handsome. And an occasional telephone lineman.

Fiction and Action

Brightman: Twenty years ago I did a masters thesis at the University of Chicago about three woman writers who greatly interested me. One of them was you, and it was *Memories of a Catholic Girlhood* and early stories like "The Man in the Brooks Brothers Shirt" that set you apart as a master of observation whose writing nonetheless honors the unruly truths of the heart. Today it seems to me that your essays about Vietnam possess both qualities in equal abundance, while a recent novel like *Cannibals and Missionaries* seems more remote from immediate experience.

McCarthy: Actually what I put in that novel was a real experience of trying to get a delegation to go to Iran.

Brightman: You mean that trip really happened?

McCarthy: Yes. But in actual fact it was to investigate torture. There was this character who came to see me in Paris and stayed on my sofa for about six weeks with his folders, and I was writing all these people like Ramsey Clark and Bishop Paul Moore. All that was true, including the fact that the committee that he talked to me about turned out not to exist—like the disappearing rabbi in the novel. One's life does tend to repeat, yes.

Brightman: Still there is something missing for me in the novel. I was caught up with your writing at times, with the feel you had for the female academic for example, the older one, Aileen, and with the way you just let people *be* by showing how they moved or how they talked. But then when they all got blown away I didn't feel any concern.

McCarthy: Well, you're not meant to.

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Brightman: You're not meant to?

McCarthy: Not really.

Brightman: Are the characters meant to be less real than characters in other novels you've written in recent decades?

McCarthy: I would say that Peter Levi is more real in *Birds of America.* That's the one that's closest to the Hanoi experience, both in time and everything else. I interrupted *Birds of America* twice, first to go to Saigon and then to go to Hanoi. I said to myself, How can I be writing about a 19-year-old boy, draft-bait, and this war is going on and I'm not doing anything! So I felt I couldn't go on; it would be too false to be close to the hero, or think I was, and just be writing a novel.

Brightman: When you were in Hanoi you told Pham Van Dong that you were not sure you could write a book, yet with all your furious note-taking it seems to have written itself. You could not hold yourself back.

McCarthy: That was the thing. I got back to Paris and wrote "Hanoi" right off, which is what I did after Saigon too; only it was during the events of 1968 in France, and I had the most terrible time getting the copy out to *The New York Review.* Nothing was functioning in Paris, and I was just shut up in my apartment, without electricity sometimes. But I was working very fast against time to get that out—except the final chapter, which was written more slowly.

Brightman: How do you feel about that writing today?

McCarthy: I haven't reread it since it appeared in *The Seventeenth Degree.*

Brightman: Here's an observation you made in the book, and I'm curious to hear if you have anything to add: "Since the 'brand' of radicalism we preferred had no appeal for the masses (only the C.I.A., as it turned out, was interested), we had no clear alternative but to be 'believing' socialists and practicing members of capitalist society."

McCarthy: That's still true. Perhaps I'm a little bit less believing, and more practicing.

Brightman: I'm curious as to whether you have given any thought to what that contradiction means.

McCarthy: I thought that somehow this experience in Vietnam was going to change my life. I didn't go there with that purpose, but while I was there I thought it would. And it did not.

Brightman: It didn't?

McCarthy: No. It sharpened some

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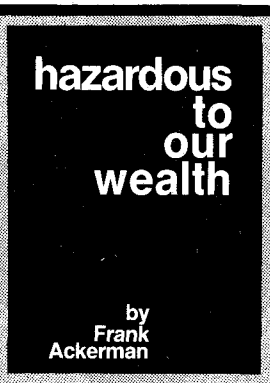

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perceptions for a while and then they wore off. It flared up again with the Christmas carpet bombing in 1972, then it vanished and I went back to writing a book about the Gothic and I went on an English cathedral tour, taking notes.

Brightman: Have there been other events that brought you to that pitch and that did in fact change your life?

McCarthy: Yes, but those are intellectual things that haven't changed my life in terms of where I live or how much money I have. One was my friendship with Nicola Chiaromonte which I think was probably *the* crucial event in my life. It was not a love affair in any respect. I met Nicola Chiaromonte around 1943 through Dwight Macdonald on the Cape.

Brightman: I don't know Chiaromonte by the way.

McCarthy: He was an Italian anarchist, fought in the Spanish Civil War, was in Malraux's air squadron, and in *L'Espoir* he's the flyer or mechanic who's always reading Plato and who's very awkward. Both parts are very true to Nicola's character. Then he came to America as an antifascist refugee during the fall of France, and eventually began writing for *Partisan Review, The New Republic* and Dwight's *Politics.* In the Spanish Civil War he became completely disillusioned with the idea of war as a means of solving anything political and became an anarchist/pacifist and worked with left-wing anarchist groups in France.

Brightman: Was it a core of ideas or a perspective on history that he passed on to you?

McCarthy: It was a kind of seriousness, a kind of thoughtfulness. The summer after I left Edmund Wilson, Reuel [her son] and I lived in Truro, and the Chiaromontes lived not far from us; we used to pass their cottage on the way to the beach and we had many beach picnics and talks at night by the fire. I was going off to teach at Bard, to begin to make my living. I was going to teach the Russian novel. And I was translating Simone Weil that summer. It was all part of the same ambiance. We talked about Tolstoy and about Dostoyevsky, and the *change* from someone like Edmund and his world was absolutely stunning.

Nicola did not like Dostoyevsky and he had an absolute passion for Tolstoy. Anyway we would talk and it had never occurred to me before to think of those two writers as anything but two writers—as *Edmund* would have looked at them. One might have said that of course T. was a much better stylist and D. wrote bad Russian and so on. But that was a completely empty literary point of view by comparison. And in some way a self-satisfied point of view: it really didn't involve thinking about what these writers were saying! Talking with Nicola Chiaromonte was an absolute awakening, and I never got over it.

Brightman: Was that really different from the way Edmund Wilson looked at things in *To the Finland Station*?

McCarthy: Well, yes. I don't want to put him down too much but he had no moral core, Wilson—or any of those people around *Partisan Review.* It never occurred to them that there should be a connection between what they read and wrote and their own lives, how they were living and what they believed in.

Hannah Arendt, she is the other person in my life who, I would say, made a change, but not so dramatic.

Brightman: She lectured at the University of Chicago when I was a graduate student, and I used to sit in on the Eichmann lectures. It was very exciting then, that kind of passionate intellectual involvement with the world. Later I felt she got herself stuck behind a kind of elitism that allowed for very limited behavior on the part of different classes and groups.

McCarthy: I really do not think there was any elitism in her. I think that what you mistake for classes in society in her work are categories. She was corseted in her own categories. She seemed to need them to be able to think.

Brightman: It's in *On Revolution* that that rigidity comes out.

McCarthy: I think that's her weakest book.

Brightman: It's not really about modern revolution. It's more a classical treatise on the idea of revolution.

McCarthy: Yes, of course. There are wonderful things in it, but she thinks that revolution should only make political change, not social change. What is a revolution if it doesn't make any social change? I don't think she ever faced the contemporary fact that you can no longer separate these categories.

Woman's Estate

Brightman: Have you interested yourself in any feminist issues that have come up in the past twenty years?

McCarthy: It just does not say Hello to me at all.

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Brightman: Really? Because it comes wrapped up in too much righteous rhetoric?

McCarthy: That too, but there are a lot of things that come wrapped in rhetoric besides feminism. I certainly don't like the tone and the shrillness and the self-pity. I loathe the emotion of self-pity.

Brightman: It's very dangerous in personal life.

McCarthy: But I'm sort of Uncle Tom from this point of view; I'm quite aware of that.

Brightman: You mean you've made your way in the world of men?

McCarthy: Yes, yes. Or I'm an "exception Jew."

Brightman: You never realized you were inferior? (laughing)

McCarthy: No, I've always liked being a woman. I had a lot of trouble, especially with Edmund Wilson.

Brightman: Did you have competition problems?

McCarthy: No. He was excellent on that score. It was that he was a terrible bully and a tyrant and paranoid—a rather pitiable man in a way, like a minotaur. But in terms of work he was marvelous. He made me write. I would never have written fiction, I think, if it hadn't been for him.

Brightman: You never had trouble working after you had a child? You never got caught up in that ancient history that overtakes you when you're a mother?

McCarthy: I did sometimes, but Edmund always insisted that I have a nurse, and sometimes we had a cook.

Brightman: But you were never limited by the expectations or training or socialization of being a woman?

McCarthy: No. I think it may be because I'm an orphan.

Brightman: Because you had to make your own way as an orphan first rather than——

McCarthy: As a girl.

Brightman: There were also some men in your life early on who supported you.

McCarthy: My grandfather was absolutely marvelous.

Brightman: And even argued with you.

McCarthy: Yes, and wanted me to do what I wanted to do. He liked that and respected it. I've had very good luck in men, and most of the men I've known have been like that.

Brightman: How is it then that in so

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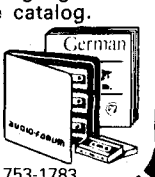

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many of your stories the relations between men and woman are so embattled?

McCarthy: Really?

Brightman: It comes out most strongly in the early short stories in *The Company She Keeps*, and in *The Group*. There's such a frustration with the limited rituals of behavior that exist between wives and husbands in particular.

McCarthy: Well, that's just bourgeois marriage!

Brightman: But that's basic to feminist literature, and you've described that piece of life with as much clarity and horror as anybody else, yet in your public life as an essayist or speaker, you have made no pronouncements.

McCarthy: I think feminism is bad for women. I mean, it induces a very bad emotional state.

Brightman: Which is self-pity?

McCarthy: The self-pity, the shrillness and the greed. There's an awful greed and covetousness there too. And what else? I've never met an intellectual woman who was a feminist—except my friend Barbara Deming. And she's a lesbian so it's a little bit different. And she's such a dear feminist, she's not really as militant as she ought to be from her own point of view.

Brightman: What was the trouble you had with Edmund Wilson?

McCarthy: He was very hard to oppose because he was so stubborn and so mean and violent when drinking. When I inherited a little bit of money from the McCarthy family—and I was earning a little bit of money from my writing—he made me put it into his bank account. And, of course, I couldn't have signature power on his bank account. I had to ask him for a nickel to make a telephone call.

Brightman: That's pretty incredible.

McCarthy: The signature power idea gave him the horrors, but it sort of did me too, because if it was a joint account and I was putting my own money in and he had signature power, that didn't look too good to me either. Anyway, I fought. I finally thought it was absolutely mad. Maybe I was going to a psychoanalyst at that point who said that perhaps I could have my own bank account, though usually they tell you to avoid change in your life arrangements. I took a stand and Edmund gave in and I had my own bank account and that was the end of it.

Brightman: Well, a good part of feminism is rooted in that kind of frustration in personal relationships.

McCarthy: I don't believe in equality in personal relationships, whether it's between two men, whatever. It's absolutely meaningless and silly.

Brightman: What about the public issues that have been fought over during the last twenty years, the right to a legal abortion, for example?

McCarthy: I'm for that. But that has nothing to do with feminism.

Brightman: Can you explain why it doesn't?

McCarthy: To me, it's just a question of freedom. If men could have abortions I'd be for that.

Brightman: Who wouldn't?

McCarthy: No, of course I'm for free abortions. I had quite a lot of abortions and I think they are rather damaging psychically, but that doesn't mean that I think people should not be free to have them.

Brightman: Yet you're detached. It surprises me somehow that you are not stirred by the struggles of women to change the laws and institutions that hem them in at a time when both domestic and economic responsibilities are theirs.

McCarthy: I've always liked being a woman. And it seems to me that one of the problems of a lot of feminists is that they don't like being women.

Brightman: What has being a woman meant for you?

McCarthy: I like the so-called domestic arts, cooking and gardening. I like clothes very, very much. I'm not interested in makeup or beauty aids but I am interested in beauty, let's say. I'm so happy that I don't have to dress like a man. What makes women want to get into pants all the time I don't understand! I also like the social gifts that women develop, almost as a species I would say, which are the gifts of observation and analysis. I think that does come from their historic position of having to get their way without direct—

Brightman: Confrontation. We have to know what we're up against.

McCarthy: Yes. And I like both the male voice and the female voice.

Brightman: There's not much of a feeling in what you've written for children, or for the experience of being a mother.

McCarthy: No, I enjoyed that. It's so far away now. I've never been mad about children. But certain specific ones I have liked.

Brightman: Did you see the French documentary that was made a few years ago about Simone de Beauvoir?

McCarthy: Yes, I saw part of it in Paris.

Brightman: She's asked why she never had children, and she says that given the conditions that mothers face in this society—limited child care, little help from fathers—it's impossible to be a writer and have an independent existence and follow one's curiosity and have a child, period. I was moved by that because theoretically she was correct—I know that from hard experience—but nevertheless one does those things.

McCarthy: Of course!

Brightman: You take on life even when it's—"wrong." I agreed with her and yet I was repelled. For a woman who thinks of herself as a leader of a women's movement, hers struck me as a strange kind of statement. I suppose she was just making a pronouncement out of her own experience.

McCarthy: I would think that the reason Simone de Beauvoir didn't have children is that she was really a shriveled up old maid.

Brightman: Really?

McCarthy: Yes.

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Brightman: What is it about her that you don't like?

McCarthy: Everything. How *dare* she talk about injustice to women when she has put herself on the map solely by attaching herself to Sartre, *solely. Sartre et moi.* He made her. She's not utterly stupid; she would be a good "B" student somewhere in the intellectual world, maybe not even a "B" student. It's bad enough that she has cribbed from him, but when you add to it this language about the oppression of women, and how as a woman she's deprived——

Brightman: I've not heard that language.

McCarthy: She doesn't say Sartre deprived her of anything; I don't mean that. She speaks of herself as deprived because of her sex, discriminated against and so on. In fact, she *made* it through her sex by attaching herself to this man, and many others of us have made it through our sex; but it's most ungrateful in her case. (laughing)

Brightman: You mean to bite the hand that feeds her?

McCarthy: I've only met her once but I gather she is an absolutely horrible person; she's extremely jealous. Nathalie Sarraute claims that she would not permit Sartre to see her. They were friends, and he wrote an introduction to one of Sarraute's books. According to her, Simone de Beauvoir permitted him to have those little girls because it didn't threaten her position, but Nathalie was her own age and a highly intelligent woman with an original mind. Anyway, according to Nathalie, she broke them up; and it happened not only with her but with other intellectual women. Sartre by all accounts was a very sweet and kind man, and in some way he pitied this woman.

Brightman: De Beauvoir?

McCarthy: Yes, for her limitations and perhaps for her greediness and ambition—that I don't know.

Brightman: It's hard to imagine that they could have maintained the relationship they did over all those years——

McCarthy: Don't you think some relations are maintained through pity?

Brightman: Yes, perhaps in marital relations where there's a real dependency that gets under way, but Sartre and de Beauvoir maintained a different kind of arrangement with much more tension in it. What did they call it? "An essential love with contingent love affairs."

McCarthy: I think the only way that

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he could stay with her was to have pity for her.

Brightman: Is that widely believed in France?

McCarthy: No, that is my opinion. She has a great cult in Paris. But she's not well liked, let's say, outside her cult of feminists, and not by all feminists either. I can't stand the way she writes; it's so dull. And I think there's also some element of a blackmailing soul in her. The way she puts out damaging things—about Camus, for example, or about Merleau-Ponty.

Brightman: You don't object to her being a fighter——

McCarthy: No, she's a dirty fighter.

An American Life

Brightman: I'm interested in knowing what the cutting edge will be in the intellectual autobiography you have begun to write.

McCarthy: I don't know; I hope that in some way this interview may be helpful. It has to be honest. It cannot start from a pinnacle of complacency. The very idea of writing your intellectual autobiography implies that it is a success. You know, Look how I evolved, and now here is where that idea of mine—now in full panoply—was born. There's a danger there.

Brightman: Is there a parable or a moral that you start with?

McCarthy: No, I'm going to try to find that. I want to bring out something American also. I don't even know how American I am—I suspect I'm very American.

Brightman: Do you think an intellectual history will help you do that?

McCarthy: More than?

Brightman: A social history.

McCarthy: No. It will be about people. The first sentence is about the time I first became conscious of the fact that there was such a thing as an intellectual.

Brightman: When was that?

McCarthy: I was about 14. I knew that there were people who wrote books, there were artists; but the idea that there was such a thing as an intellectual had not crossed my horizon until I was about 14. It was a young man. He was quite a bit older than I was, but by chance I knew him and had a kind of girlish crush. He was actually very darling; he was a campus intellectual and edited the magazine.

IN FRONT OF A POSTER OF GARIBALDI

1
When my Italian son
admired a poster of Garibaldi
in the piazzetta of Venice,
a national father in a red shirt,
gold chain, Moroccan fez and fancy beard,
I wished the boy knew the Lincoln
who read after a day's work,
the honesty, the commoner.
My knees hurt from my life and playing soccer
—not that I see Lincoln splashing with his kids
in the Potomac. Lord knows where his dead son led him.

2
My son tells me *Fortuna* could have put
Lincoln and Garibaldi in Venice—
Garibaldi in red silk, Lincoln
in a stovepipe hat black as a gondola.
My son mimics Garibaldi:
"Lincoln you may be the only man in the piazza
to log down the Mississippi
and walk back the 1500 miles to Illinois
but you are still a man who calls all pasta macaroni.
How do you know where you are going?
Your shoes are straights, no lasts,
no right or left, no fashion, white socks.
How can the President of the United States
make such a *brutta figura*?"

3
I can't speak for Lincoln,
anymore than I can sing for Caruso
—toward the end when Caruso sang
his mouth filled with blood.
Not every poet bites into his own jugular,
some hunger, some observe the intelligence of clouds.
I was surprised to see a heart come out
of the torn throat of a snake. I know a poet
whose father blew his brains out
before his son was born, still leads his son
into the unknown, the unknowable.

4
My son tells me I must not forget
Garibaldi fought for liberty in six countries
including Uruguay, he refused the command
of a corps that Lincoln offered,
asked to be head of the Union armies
and an immediate declaration against slavery,
he was the King's flag, defeated
the papal armies in 1866,
which gave the Jews equality in Italy,
looking to the North, he supported the Danes against
the Swedes, fought against the Austrians all his life,
fought with the French, who had been his enemy,
against the Prussians—he'd shoot a trooper
for stealing a chicken.

5
I've always had a preference
for politics you could sing
on the stage of the Scala.
I give my son Lincoln and Garibaldi
as guardian angels.
May he join a party and a temple
that offer a chair to the starving and unrespectable.
We come from stock that on the day of atonement
ask forgiveness for theft, murder, lies, betrayal,
for all the sins and crimes of the congregation.
May he take his girls and bride to Venice,
may the blessings come like pigeons.
Lincoln waves from his gondola and whispers,
"I don't know what the soul is,
but whatever it is, I know it can humble itself."

Stanley Moss

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Brightman: You began to see that as a possible avenue for something to be?

McCarthy: I just became conscious that there were these people and that they were different from other people.

Brightman: It sounds like the style will be very much like *Memories of a Catholic Girlhood.*

McCarthy: Yes, yes.

Brightman: And you will be studying where ideas started—for you—but starting with the social experience. That sounds exciting.

McCarthy: And it will contain a lot of portraits, some of people that nobody has ever heard of and some that are well known.

Brightman: And what interests you is to see if in doing these portraits, bringing these people alive—some of them are probably dead, right?

McCarthy: Most of them are dead.

Brightman: That you will find out more about what they had to say.

McCarthy: Yes, and about how ideas develop in this country. I think there is in my mind an American tincture to this.

Brightman: Something along the lines of *The Education of Henry Adams*?

McCarthy: There's quite a bit of complacency there.

Brightman: I don't mean the content of it but the idea of looking at one's education as a way of understanding one's place in the world.

McCarthy: Yes, yes. And you know, I think that getting to know Hannah Arendt and Nicola Chiaromonte, and becoming very close to them—probably that was Europe! You know, I've never thought of that until this minute. Hannah and Nicola had one striking thing in common: they were both Europeans. They both were Platonists too, incidentally, or Socratics, rather. And when I was talking before about the radical difference I felt with Nicola from what I was used to with Edmund and his circle, what I was listening to on the beach was Europe.

Brightman: You don't think you're coming full circle to becoming a royalist again, do you?*

McCarthy: No, no! I realize that I'm extremely conservative.

Brightman: God and the king are dead.

McCarthy: I think I've always been extremely conservative. I feel I'm the only one! I mean, the idea that someone like William Buckley is a conservative is just totally laughable. Nobody who believes in the capitalist system can possibly be a conservative, because it's a contradiction in terms.

Brightman: Why is that?

McCarthy: Because of the growth ethic that is built into the system. Everything has to be in continual growth and presumed evolution. A true conservative wants to preserve something resembling a golden age. Not only would he be against nuclear power—that goes without saying—he would also have to be against crossbreeding.

Brightman: Crossbreeding of what?

McCarthy: Plants.

Brightman: Do you think there is a "golden age" in your memory?

McCarthy: Not in *my* memory. But I think we were in much better rapport with nature, certainly, in the past. Some things have obviously been gained. Maybe the vacuum cleaner is an improvement. But I think air travel is absolutely ruinous. Aside from getting us into wars, it distorts our relationship with nature. And I think our perception of the world and our values stem absolutely from the possibility of some reasonably true perception of nature—which is gradually disappearing, and will soon become impossible. □

*In an early essay, McCarthy once described herself half-seriously as a royalist.

THEATER.

PAUL BERMAN

Brecht's Ashes 2
Beethoven's Tenth
Other Places
Suzanna Andler

Brecht was so great a Marxist that even his personality was dialectical. Thesis paddled to one side, antithesis paddled to the other, and the man's canoe squirted across the water in ways incomprehensible to simpler souls. The dialectical twist makes it hard to do as Auden wanted, and administer capital punishment. Brecht's every sin can claim its redeeming irony. He produced one of the greatest defenses of communist discipline and submission ever written, *The Measures Taken*, but the play was itself an offense against discipline and submission, and can be performed nowhere in the Communist world. He cheered Stalin with what seems like a depressing gullibility, but never doubted that it was safer to be persecuted as a communist in Hollywood than to be celebrated as one in Moscow. After the war he disgraced himself propagandizing for the East German government; privately he flirted with Marxist dissidents and campaigned for artistic freedom. He won the Lenin Peace Prize; he deposited the money in a Swiss bank.

Brecht was perverse—that was the meaning of his dialectical personality—and by now it's obvious not only that perversity was half his genius but that he stood in the great line of perverse geniuses. Walter Benjamin did right to go live with Brecht when he was writing his book on Baudelaire. Brecht declared himself in favor of "crude thinking," but you can peel away the layers of crudity forever without getting to his cunning core. Beneath the social indignation, the outrage on behalf of the downtrodden, lies a cynical vision of human relations; beneath the cynicism, an irony; beneath the irony, a touch of the ruthless. He seems to be affirming something, but what is it? It's certainly not the straightforward humanist radicalism of an Orwell or Ignazio Silone. His ideas on poetry and drama are just as ambiguous. The penchant for impersonality, anonymity, submitting to the collective, puts him in a camp with Eliot. But peel away the impersonality and you find stratagems for self-mythology. His plays, except maybe the very early ones, were never autobiographical, yet in a sense he was always saying, "I, Bertolt Brecht . . ." For you can hardly sit through one of the better Brechts without wondering, Who is this guy? How did he get like that?

A recent occasion for wondering that was the production of *Brecht's Ashes 2* by Eugenio Barba and the Odin Teatret at La Mama. Odin is an experimental Danish troupe with all sorts of ideas about theater internationalism and a concept Barba calls "Third Theater," which means neither mainstream nor orthodox avant-garde, but instead an avant-garde that performs for working-class audiences. *Brecht's Ashes* follows Brecht from early Berlin years to exile in Denmark, Sweden, Finland and America, then back to East Germany. Café tables surround the stage and there are plays-within-plays-within-cabarets. Figures from Brecht's life wander among figures from the poems and plays, quoting lines in German, Danish

Paul Berman writes for The Village Voice.

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and English. The mood is relentlessly harsh and angular, Brechter than Brecht, with lots of shattering glass and doleful music, mostly provided by an organist but also by the actors, who double on brass, strings and woodwinds. The Helene Weigel figure gets up at one point and howls one of those lugubrious Weimar ballads that pushes melancholy to the brink of suicide—across the brink—then returns for a final chorus, more lugubrious than the last.

Of sentimentality, there appears to be none—until you realize that *Brecht's Ashes* has unwittingly imitated the silly drawings artists do of playwrights, in which the author sits at his desk and the ghostly images of his greatest characters flit about him. So there sits the great author on the La Mama floor, clacking at an ancient typewriter, and around the stage flit Mack the Knife, Galileo, Yvette the whore, Daughter Courage the mute and notorious others. Chinese boatmen punt past in little skiffs. The situation can't help putting the creator of all those characters in a godlike light, which is to say there's mush at the center of *Brecht's Ashes*. The mush wasn't intended, and Odin aims plenty of criticism, even ridicule, in B.B.'s direction. The unavoidable political objections are registered; someone waves a Soviet newspaper in a menacing way. But there's no avoiding the divine glow. Nor are things improved by the actor in the central role, a dashing fellow who seems better suited to do Flynn, Errol, than Brecht, Bertolt.

At the end, B.B. dies, the lights go out, and the corpse speaks. "Don't let yourself be seduced," it quotes. This is a political remark meant to summarize Brecht's message, warning the masses against capitalist manipulation. The effect is to lionize him yet again. But you do notice that antiseductionism has hidden depths, coming from a man who spent much of his life seducing and being seduced, politically and otherwise. Which side of the dialectic is speaking, one wants to know, the antifascist or the party man who supported suppression of the workers' uprising in 1953? The authoritarian or the rebel? Maybe Odin intended us to worry such questions, after all. But there's no chance to puzzle it through. When the lights go out at La Mama, they really go out. You can't even see the emergency exit signs. This prompts thoughts about the building, which is 100 years old; about the seats, which are unpainted wooden planks, located very far from any escape route; about fires, which smolder throughout the play, as in book-burnings; and about the amount of time it would take that old barn of a theater to burn. Thirty seconds, maybe. I spent the last scene of *Brecht's Ashes* worried sick about Berman's ashes. A brilliant alienation effect!

Brecht's Ashes 2 ran until May 6. The same troupe is performing a play about Marco Polo called *The Million* until May 13.

In *Beethoven's Tenth* by Peter Ustinov (starring Ustinov and George Rose, at the Nederlander), it's Beethoven who returns from the dead for a chatty visit with a London music critic and his family. There are funny lines, but all the best ones are delivered twice. Beethoven knocks on the door in the rhythm of the Fifth Symphony, and fifteen minutes later someone has to recall this fact, which rather deflates it. *Beethoven's Tenth* can be regarded as a pre-emptive strike against critics, since the critics of 1800 didn't appreciate Beethoven, the fools. Leaving critics aside, then, one can say that Brecht would have hated this play. The lights are worth mentioning because they always seem to be getting dimmer. The lights go down, the humor drops, the piano sounds tinny and eventually you can leave.

Two of the one-acts in *Other Places* by Harold Pinter (Manhattan Theatre Club) offer variations on the theme of authority, the absolute power of one person over another. In *A Kind of Alaska* Dianne Wiest does splendidly as a young girl who falls into a coma and wakes up twenty-nine years later, young no more, under the care all these years of her paternal doctor. Benign authority. What if the power is not so benign? The second play, *One For The Road*, shows an intellectual and his family who have fallen into the social coma known as fascism. The torture they experience is terribly grisly. This is strange, because director Alan Schneider, in one of his other last productions before his death, staged a second one-act on totalitarian control, Beckett's *Catastrophe*—but in this case did it with supreme elegance and spareness, to much greater effect. The theme remains interesting, and it's striking to see unpoliticals like Beckett and Pinter take on such political questions.

In *Suzanna Andler* by Marguerite Duras (South Street Theatre), Madame

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and Monsieur have been deceiving each other, but not the rest of the world, who talk up their infidelities ad nauseam. What's interesting, barely, are hints of class struggle, since Madame's lover is a journalist who would like to see Monsieur sentenced to work in a factory. Monsieur is a millionaire leftist, which gives the class struggle a bit of what pool players call English, but in this case is French. □

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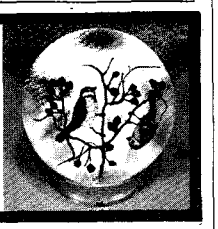

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SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 2008

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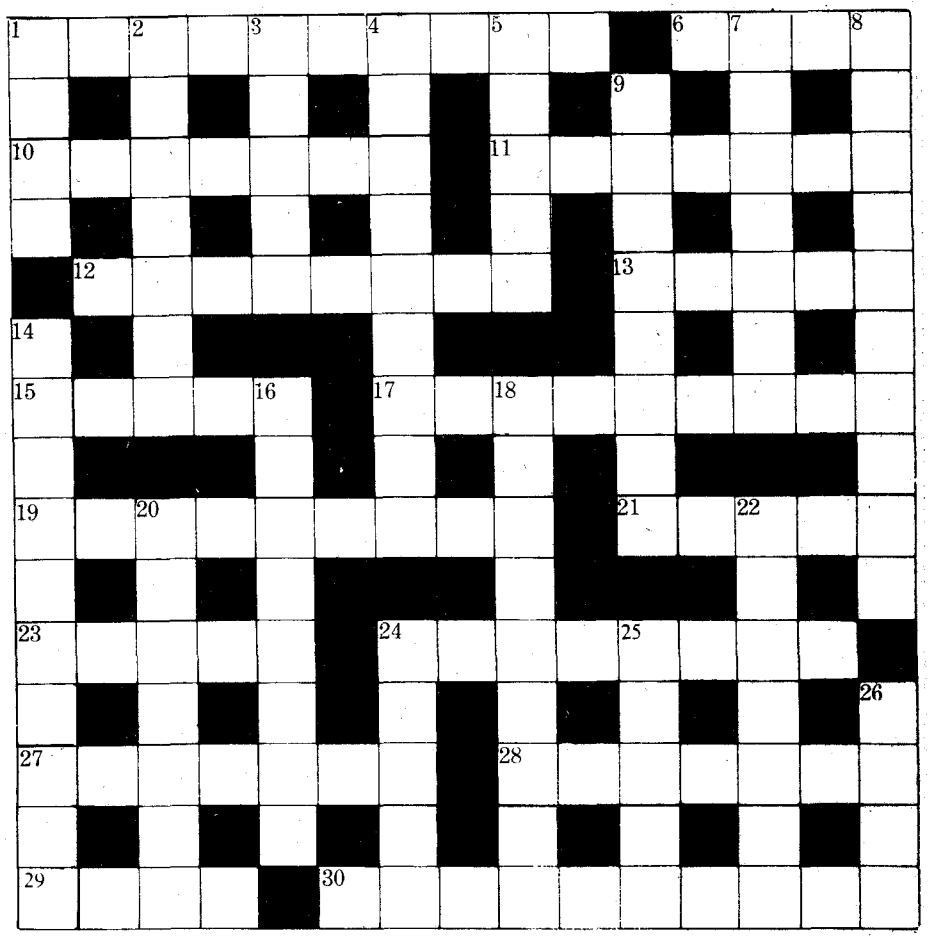
Crossword Puzzle No. 2009

FRANK W. LEWIS



ACROSS

1 You might make the term vanish this way, but the removal is violent. (10)
6 See 4 down
10 One of poor breeding ain't bad—though one has its ups and downs. (7)
11 Refers to everything, having used the wrong end. (7)
12 Ends up with his sort in payment for wrong-doing. (8)
13 See 20 down
15 See 4 down
17 There may be one after every poker hand—as many a pre-war politician might have been. (3,6)
19 Give short shrift to young girls—in the hands of old sailors they might spell trouble! (9)
21 Early archaic form of heart trouble. (5)
23 and 24 See 20 down
27 Time certain to show what removes the past record. (7)
28 Alternatively the country has nothing in Florida. (7)
29 Pierre's country proves worthwhile, obviously. (4)
30 One might have to before letting the cat out of the bag—which is one way to be fired! (3,3,4)

DOWN

1 and 7 A ship in a storm might dance this way. (Some are not pleased to hear it.) (4,3,4)
2 It might indicate a borderline case, but a bad giver has a "no good" end. (7)
3 Might be a ship or a foreign man-of-war. (5)
4, 6 and 15 across and 26 Evidently it takes lots to pull the switch—20 down, etc., to the contrary! (4,5,4,5,4)
5 Comes close to being one that listens from pole to pole. (5)
6 See 4
7 See 1
8 You might do well to live here, though the way isn't hard! (4,6)
9 It's obvious that danger's in the past with it. (3,5)
14 Reputedly those that stray don't expect to see white coats with them. (5,5)
16 With all I umpire, you can see an element of poison! (8)
18 Rather run-down, but things can't be if the laundry's inside. (6,3)
20 and 13, 23 and 24 across Conveys a different sort of advice from 4 down, etc.! (3,4,5,5,3,5)
22 *Faerie Queene* character? No, Shakespearean. (7)
24 Certainly not those things found in a winding sheet. (5)
25 Mr. Pocohontas? (Loud in part!) (5)
26 See 4

SEE LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION AT LEFT

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